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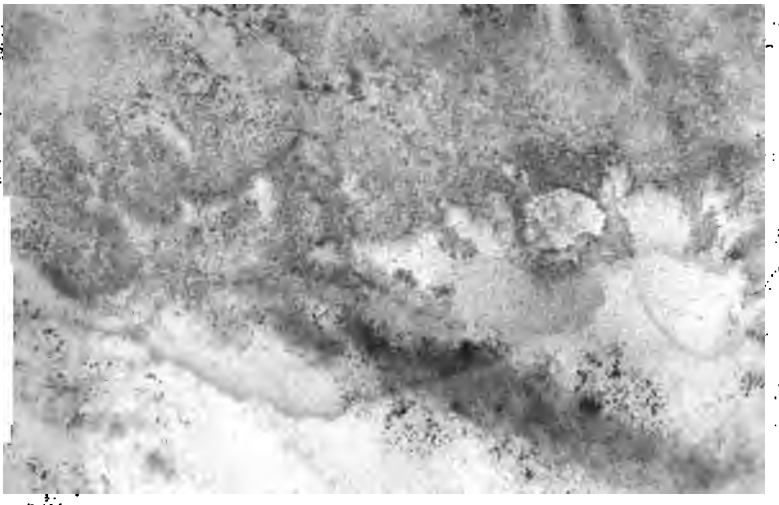

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THE

WORKS

OF

THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.

MINISTER OF THE TRON CHURCH,

GLASGOW.

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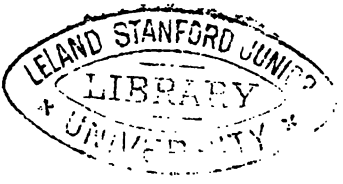

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ON

THE DEPRAVITY

OF

HUMAN NATURE.

BY

REV. THOMAS CHALMERS, D. D.
Minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow.

BRIDGEPORT:
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SERMON IX.

THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE TO GOD.

JUDE 21.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God."

It is not easy to give the definition of a term, which is currently and immediately understood without one. But, should not this ready understanding of the term supersede the definition of it, what can we tell of love in the way of explanation, but by a substitution of terms, not more simple and more intelligible than itself? Can this affection of the soul be made clearer to you by words, than it is already clear to you by your own consciousness? Are we to attempt the elucidation of a term, which, without any feeling of darkness or of mystery, you make familiar use of every day? You say with the utmost promptitude, and you have just as ready an apprehension of the meaning of what you say, that I love this man, and bear a still higher regard to another, but have my chief and my best liking directed to a third. We will not attempt to go in search of a more luminous or expressive term, for this simple affection, than the one that is commonly employed. But it is a different thing, to throw light upon the workings of this affection,—to point your attention to the objects on which it rests, and finds a complacent gratification,—and to assign the circumstances, which are either favourable or unfavourable to its excitement. All this may call forth an exercise of discrimination. But instead of dwelling any more on the significancy of the term love, which is the term of my text, let us forthwith take it unto use, and be confident that, in itself, it carries no ambiguity along with it.

The term love, indeed, admits of a real and intelligible application to inanimate objects. There is a beauty in sights, and a beauty in sounds, and I may bear a positive love to the mute and unconscious individuals in which this beauty hath taken up its residence. I may love a flower, or a murmuring stream, or a sunny bank, or a humble cottage peeping forth from its concealment,—or in fine, a whole landscape may teem with such varied graces, that I may say of it, this is the scene I most love to behold, this is the prospect over which my eye and my imagination most fondly expatiate.

The term love admits of an equally real, and equally intelligent application, to our fellow-men. They, too are the frequent and familiar objects of this affection, and they often are so, because they possess certain accomplishments of person and of character, by which it is excited. I love the man whose every glance speaks an effusive cordiality towards those who are around him. I love the man whose heart and whose hand are ever open to the representations of distress. I love the man who possesses such a softness of nature, that the imploring look of a brother in want, or of a brother in pain, disarms him of all his selfishness, and draws him out to some large and willing surrender of generosity. I love the man who carries on his aspect, not merely the expression of worth, but of worth maintained in the exercise of all its graces, under every variety of temptation and discouragement; who, in the midst of calumny, can act the warm and enlightened philanthropist; who, when beset with many provocations, can weather them all in calm and settled endurance; who can be kind even to the unthankful and the evil; and who, if he possess the awful virtues of truth and of justice, only heightens our attachment the more, that he possesses goodness, and tenderness, and benignity along with them.

Now, we would have you to advert to one capital distinction, between the former and the latter class of objects. The inanimate reflect no love upon us back again. They do not single out any one of their admirers, and, by an act of preference, either minister to his selfish appetite for esteem, or minister to his selfish appetite for enjoyment, by affording to him a larger

share than to others, of their presence, and of all the delights which their presence inspires. They remain motionless in their places, without will and without sensibility; and the homage they receive, is from the disinterested affection, which men bear to their loveliness. They are loved, and that purely, because they are lovely. There is no mixture of selfishness in the affection that is offered to them. They do not put on a sweeter smile to one man than to another; but all the features of that beauty in which they are arrayed, stand inflexibly the same to every beholder; and he, without any conscious mingling whatever of self-love, in the emotion with which he gazes at the charms of some external scenery, is actuated by a love towards it, which rests and which terminates on the objects that he is employed in contemplating.

But this is not always the case, when our fellow-men are the objects of this affection. I should love cordiality, and benevolence, and compassion for their own sakes; but let your own experience tell how far more sweetly and more intensely the love is felt, when this cordiality is turned, in one stream of kindliness, towards myself; when the eye of friendship has singled out me, and looks at me with a peculiar graciousness; when the man of tenderness has pointed his way to the abode of my suffering family, and there shed in secrecy over them his liberalities, and his tears; when he has forgiven me the debt that I was unable to discharge; and when, oppressed as I am, by the consciousness of having injured or reviled him, he has nobly forgotten or overlooked the whole provocation, and persists in a regard that knows no abatement, in a well-doing that is never weary.

There is an element, then, in the love I bear to a fellow-man, which does not exist in the love I bear to an inanimate object; and which may serve, perhaps, to darken the character of the affection that I feel towards the former. We most readily concede it, that the love of another, on account of the virtues which adorn him, changes its moral character altogether, if it be a love to him, solely on account of the benefit which I derive from the exercise of these virtues. I should love compassion on its own account, as well as on the account that it is I who have been the

object of it. I should love justice on its own account, as well as on the account that my grievances have been redressed by the dispensation of it. On looking at goodness, I should feel an affection resting on this object, and finding there its full and its terminating gratification; and that, though I had never stood in the way of any one of its beneficent operations.

How is it, then, that the special direction of a moral virtue in another, towards the object of my personal benefit, operates in enhancing both the sensation which it imparts to my heart, and the estimate which I form of it? What is the peculiar quality communicated to my admiration of another's friendship, and another's goodness, by the circumstance of myself, being the individual towards whom that friendship is cherished, and in favour of whom, that goodness puts itself forth into active exertion? At the sight of a benevolent man, there arises in my bosom an instantaneous homage of regard and of reverence;—but should that homage take a pointed direction towards myself,—should it realize its fruits on the comfort, and the security of my own person,—should it be employed in gladdening my home, and spreading enjoyment over my family, oppressed with want and pining in sickness, there is, you will allow, by these circumstances, a heightening of the love and the admiration that I formerly rendered to him. And, we should like to know what is the precise character of the addition that has thus been given, to my regard for the virtue of benevolence. We should like to know, if it be altogether a pure and a praise-worthy accession that has thus come upon the sentiment with which I now look at my benefactor,—or, if, by contracting any taint of selfishness, it has lost the high rank that formerly belonged to it, as a disinterested affection, towards the goodness which beautifies and adorns his character.

There is one way, however, in which this special direction of a moral virtue towards my particular interest, may increase my affection for it, and without changing the moral character of my affection. It gives me a nearer view of the virtue in question. It is true, that the virtue may just be as lovely when exercised in behalf of my neighbour, as when exercised in behalf of myself. But, in the former case, I am not an eye-witness

to the display and the evolution of its loveliness. I am a limited being, who cannot take in so full and so distinct an impression of the character of what is distant, as of the character of what is immediately beside me. It is true, that all the circumstances may be reported. But you know very well, that a much livelier representation is obtained of any object, by the seeing of it, than by the hearing of it. To be told of kindness, does not bring this attribute of character so forcibly, or so clearly home to my observation, as to receive a visit from kindness, and to take it by the hand, and to see its benignant mien, and to hear its gentle and complacent voice, and to witness the solicitude of its iniquiries, and to behold its tender and honest anxiety for my interest, and to share daily and weekly in the liberalities which it has bestowed upon me. When all this goes on around my own person, and within the limits of my own dwelling-place, it is very true that self is gratified, and that this circumstance may give rise to sensations, which are altogether distinct from the love I bear to moral worth, or to moral excellence. But this does not hinder, that along with these sensations, a disinterested love for the moral virtue of which I have been the object, may, at the same time, have its room and its residence within my bosom. I may love goodness more than ever, on its own account, since it has taken its specific way to my habitation, and that, just because I have obtained a nearer acquaintance with it. I may love it better, because I know it better. My affection for it may have become more intense, and more devoted than before, because its beauty is now more fully unfolded to the eye of my observation than before. And thus, while we admit that the goodness of which I am the object, originates within me certain feelings different in kind from that which is excited by goodness in the general, yet it may heighten the degree of this latter feeling also. It may kindle or augment the love I bear to moral virtue in itself; or, in other words, it may enhance my affection for worth, without any change whatever in the moral character of that affection.

Now, before we proceed to consider those peculiar emotions which are excited within me, by being the individual, in whose favour certain virtues are exercised, and which emotions are,

all of them, different in kind from the affection that I bear for these virtues,—let us farther observe, that the term love, when applied to sentient being, considered as the object of it, may denote an affection, different in the principle of its excitement, from any that we have been yet considering. My love to another may lie in the liking I have for the moral qualities which belong to him; and this, by way of distinctness, may be called the love of moral esteem or approbation. Or, my love to another, may consist in the desire I have for his happiness; and this may be called the love of kindness. These two are often allied to each other in fact, but there is a real difference in their nature. The love of kindness which I bear to my infant child, may have no reference to its moral qualities whatever. This love finds its terminating gratification, in obtaining for the object of it, exemption from pain, or in ministering to its enjoyments. It is very true, that the sight of what is odious or revolting in the character of another, tends, in point of fact, to dissipate all the love of kindness I may have ever borne to him. But it does not always do so, and one instance of this proves a real distinction, in point of nature, between the love of kindness, and the love of moral esteem. And the highest and most affecting instance which can be given of this distinction, is in the love wherewith God hath loved the world; is in that kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus, which he hath made known to men in the Gospel; is in that longing regard to his fallen creatures, whereby he was not willing that any should perish, but rather that all should live. There was the love of kindness standing out, in marked and separate display, from the love of moral esteem; for, alas! in the degraded race of mankind, there was not one quality which could call forth such an affection, in the breast of the Godhead. It was, when we were hateful to him in character, that, in person and in interest, we were the objects of his most unbounded tenderness. It was, when we were enemies by wicked works, that God looked on with pity, and stretched forth, to his guilty children, the arms of offered reconciliation. It was when we had wandered far, in the paths of worthlessness and alienation, that he devised a

message of love, and sent his Son into our world, to seek and to save us.

And this, by the way, may serve to illustrate the kind of love which we are required to bear to our enemies. We are required to love them, in the same way in which God loves his enemies. A conscientious man will feel oppressed by the difficulty of such a precept, if he try to put it into obedience, by loving those who have offended, with the same feeling of complacency with which he loves those who have befriended him. But the truth is, that the love of moral esteem often enters, as a principal ingredient, into the love of complacency; and we are not required, by our imitation of the Godhead, to entertain any such affection, for the depraved and the worthless. It is enough, that we cherish towards them in our hearts the love of kindness; and this will be felt a far more practicable achievement, than to force up the love of complacency into a bosom, revolted by the aspect of treachery, or dishonesty, or unprincipled selfishness. There is no possible motive to excite the latter affection. There may be a thousand to excite the former: and we have only to look to the unhappy man in all his prospects, and in all his relations; we have only to pity his delusions, and to view him as the hapless victim of a sad and ruinous infatuation; we have only to carry our eye onwards to the agonies of that death, which will shortly lay hold of him, and to compute the horrors of that eternity, which if not recovered from the error of his way, he is about to enter; we have only, in a word, to put forth an exercise of faith in certain near and impending realities, the evidence of which is altogether resistless, in order to summon up such motives, and such considerations, as may cause the compassion of our nature to predominate over the resentment of our nature: and as will assure to a believer the victory over such urgencies of his constitution as, to the unrenewed heart, are utterly unconquerable.

But to resume our argument, let it be observed that the kindness of God is one of the loveliest, and most estimable of the attributes, which belong to him. It is a bright feature in that assemblage of exellencies, which enter into the character of the Godhead: and, as such independently altogether of this kind-

ness being exercised upon me, I should offer to it the homage of my moral approbation. But, should I be the special and the signalized object of his kindness, there is another sentiment toward God, beside the love of moral esteem, that ought to be formed within me by that circumstance, and which, in the business of reasoning, should be kept apart from it. There is the love of gratitude. These often go together, and may be felt simultaneously, towards the one being we are employed in contemplating. But they are just as distinct, each from the other, as is the love of moral esteem from the love of kindness. We trust that we have already convinced you, that God feels towards us, his inferiors, the love of kindness, when he cannot, from the the nature of the object, feel for us the slightest degree of the love of moral esteem. In the same manner, may we feel, we are not saying towards God, but towards an earthly benefactor, the love of gratitude, when, from the nature of the object we are employed in contemplating, there is much to impair within us the love of moral esteem, or to extinguish it altogether. Is it not most natural to say of the man, who has been personally benevolent to myself, and who has, at the same time, disgraced himself, by his vices, that, bad as he is, he has been at all times remarkably kind to me, and felt many a movement of friendship towards my person, and done many a deed of important service to my family, and that I, at least, owe him a gratitude for all this,—that I, at least, should be longer than others, of dismissing from my bosom the last remainder of cordiality towards him, —that if, infamy and poverty have followed, in the career of his wickedness, and he have become an outcast from the attentions of other men, it is not for me to spurn him instantly from my door,—or, in the face of my particular recollections, to look unpitying and unmoved, at the wretchedness into which he has fallen.

It is the more necessary, to distinguish the love of gratitude from the love of moral esteem, that each of these affections may be excited simultaneously within me, by one act or by one exhibition of himself, on the part of the Deity. Let me be made to understand, that God has passed by my transgression, and generously admitted me into the privileges and the rewards of

obedience,—I see in this, a tenderness, and a mercy, and a love, for his creatures, which, if blended at the same time with all that is high and honourable in the more august attributes of his nature, have the effect of presenting him to my mind, and of drawing out my heart in moral regard to him, as a most amiable and estimable object of contemplation. But besides this, there is a peculiar love of gratitude, excited by the consideration that I am the object of this benignity,—that I am one of the creatures to whom he has directed this peculiar regard,—that he has singled out me, and conceived a gracious purpose towards me, and in the execution of this purpose is lavishing upon my person, the blessings of a father's care, and a father's tenderness. Both the love of moral esteem, and the love of gratitude, may thus be in contemporaneous operation within me; and it will be seen to accomplish a practical, as well as a metaphysical purpose, to keep the one apart from the other, in the view of the mind, when love towards God is the topic of speculation, which engages it.

But, farther, let it be understood, that the love of gratitude differs from the love of moral esteem, not merely in the cause which immediately originates it, but also in the object, in which it finds its rest and its gratification. It is the kindness of another being to myself, which originates within me the love of gratitude towards him; and it is the view of what is morally estimable in this being, that originates within me all the love of moral esteem, that I entertain for him. There is a real distinction of cause between these two affections, and there is also between them a real distinction of object. The love of moral esteem finds its complacent gratification, in the act of dwelling contemplatively on that Being, by whom it is excited; just as a tasteful enthusiast inhales delight from the act of gazing, on the charms of some external scenery. The pleasure he receives, emanates directly upon his mind, from the forms of beauty and of loveliness, which are around him. And if, instead of a taste for the beauties of nature, there exists within him, a taste for the beauties of holiness, then will he love the Being, who presents to the eye of his contemplation the fullest assemblage of them, and his taste will find its complacent gratification in dwell-

ing upon him, whether as an object of thought, or as an object of perception. "One thing have I desired," says the Psalmist, "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Now, the love of gratitude is distinct from this in its object. It is excited by the love of kindness; and the feeling which is thus excited, is just a feeling of kindness back again. It is kindness begetting kindness. The language of this affection is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" He has done what is pleasing and gratifying to me. What shall I do to please, and to gratify him? The love of gratitude seeks for answers to this question, and finds its delight in acting upon them, and whether the answer be,—this is the will of God even your sanctification,—or, with the sacrifices of liberality God is well pleased,—or, obedience to parents is well pleasing in his sight,—these all point out so many lines of conduct, to which the impulse of the love of gratitude would carry us, and attest this to be the love of God,—that ye keep his commandments.

And, indeed, when the same Being combines, in his own person, that which ought to excite the love of moral esteem, with that which ought to excite the love of gratitude,—the two ingredients, enter with a mingled but harmonious concurrence, into the exercise of one compound affection. It is true, that the more appropriate offering of the former is the offering of praise,—just as when one looks to the beauties of nature, he breaks out into a rapturous acknowledgment of them; and so it may be, when one looks to the venerable, and the lovely in the character of God. The more appropriate offering of the latter, is the offering of thanksgiving, or of such services as are fitted to please, and to gratify a benefactor. But still it may be observed, how each of these simple affections tends to express itself, by the very act which more characteristically marks the workings of the other; or, how the more appropriate offering of the first of them, may be prompted under the impulse, and movement of the second of them, and conversely. For, if I love God because of his perfections, what principle can more powerfully or more directly lead to the imitation of them?—

which is the very service that he requires, and the very offering that he is most pleased with. And, if I love God because of his goodness to me, what is more fitted to prompt my every exertion, in the way of spreading the honours of his character and of his name among my fellows,—and, for this purpose, to magnify in their hearing the glories and the attributes of his nature? It is thus that the voice of praise and the voice of gratitude may enter into one song of adoration; and that whilst the Psalmist, at one time, gives thanks to God at the remembrance of his holiness, he, at another, pours forth praise at the remembrance of his mercies.

To have the love of gratitude towards God, it is essential that we know and believe his love of kindness towards us. To have the love of moral esteem towards him, it is essential that the loveliness of his character be in the eye of the mind: or, in other words, that the mind keep itself in steady and believing contemplation of the excellencies which belong to him. The view that we have of God, is just as much in the order of precedency to the affection that we entertain for him, as any two successive steps can be, in any of the processes of our mental constitution. To obtain the introduction of love into the heart, there must, as a preparatory circumstance, be the introduction of knowledge into the understanding; or, as we can never be said to know what we do not believe—ere we have love, we must have faith; and, accordingly, in the passage from which our text is extracted, do we perceive the one pointed to, as the instrument for the production of the other. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, building yourselves up on your most holy faith."

And here, it ought to be remarked, that a man may experience a mental process, and yet have no taste or no understanding for the explanation of it. The simple truths of the Gospel, may enter with acceptance into the mind of a peasant, and there work all the proper influences on his heart and character, which the Bible ascribes to them: and yet he may be utterly incapable of tracing that series of inward movements, by which he is carried onwards from a belief in the truth, to all those moral and affectionate regards, which mark a genuine disciple of the

truth. He may be the actual subject of these movements, though altogether unable to follow or to analyze them. This is not peculiar to the judgments, or the feelings of Christianity. In the matters of ordinary life, a man may judge sagaciously, and feel correctly while ardently;—and experience, in right and natural order, the play of his various faculties, without having it at all in his power, either to frame or to follow a true theory of his faculties. It is well, that the simple preaching of the Gospel has its right practical operation on men, who make no attempt whatever, to comprehend the metaphysics of the operation. But, if ever metaphysics be employed to darken the freeness of the Gospel offer, or to dethrone faith from the supremacy which belongs to it, or to forbid the approaches of those whom God has not forbidden; then must it be met upon its own ground, and the real character of our beneficent religion be asserted, amid the attempts of those who have in any way obscured or injured it by their illustrations.

SERMON X.

GRATITUDE, NOT A SORDID AFFECTION.

1 JOHN iv. 19.

"We love him, because he first loved us."

SOME theologians have exacted from an inquirer, at the very outset of his conversion, that he should carry in his heart what they call the disinterested love of God. They have set him on the most painful efforts to acquire this affection,—and that too, before he was in circumstances in which it was at all possible to entertain it. They have led him to view with suspicion the love of gratitude, as having in it a taint of selfishness. They are for having him to love God, and that on the single ground that he is lovely, without any reference to his own comfort, or even to his own safety. Strange demand which they make on a sentient being, that even amidst the fears and the images of destruction, he should find room in his heart for the love of complacency! and equally strange demand to make on a sinful being, that ere he admit such a sense of reconciliation into his bosom, as will instantly call forth a grateful regard to him who has conferred it, he must view God with a disinterested affection; that from the deep and helpless abyss of his depravity, he must find, unaided, his ascending way to the purest and the sublimest emotion of moral nature; that ere he is delivered from fear he must love, even though it be said of love, that it casteth out fear; and that ere he is placed on the vantage ground of the peace of the Gospel, he must realize on his character, one of the most exalted of its perfections.

The effect of all this on many an anxious seeker after rest, has been most discouraging. With the stigma that has been

affixed to the love of gratitude, they have been positively apprehensive of the inroads of this affection, and have studiously averted the eye of their contemplation from the objects which are fitted to inspire it. In other words, they have hesitated to entertain the free offers of salvation, and misinterpreted all the tokens of an embassy, which has proclaimed peace on earth and good will to men. They think that all which they can possibly gather, in the way of affection, from such a contemplation, is the love of gratitude; and that gratitude is selfishness; and that selfishness is not a gracious affection; and that ere they be surely and soundly converted, the love they bear to God must be of a totally disinterested character; and thus through another medium than that of a free and gratuitous dispensation of kindness, do they strive, by a misunderstood gospel, or without the gospel altogether, to reach a peace and a preparation which we fear, in their way of it, is to sinners utterly unattainable.

In the progress of this discourse let us endeavour, in the first place, to rescue the love of gratitude from the imputations which have been preferred against it,—and secondly, to assign to the love of kindness manifested to the world in the gospel, and to the faith by which that love is made to arise in the heart, the place and the pre-eminence which belong to them.

I. The proper object of the love of gratitude, is the being who has exercised towards me the love of kindness; and this is more correct than to say, that the proper object of this affection is the being who has conferred benefits upon me. I can conceive another to load me with benefactions, and at the same time, to evince that kindness towards me was not the principle which impelled him. It may be done reluctantly at the bidding of another, or it may be done to serve some interested purpose, or it may be done to parade his generosity before the eye of the public. If it be not done from a real principle of kindness to myself, I may take his gifts, and I may find enjoyment in the use of them; but I feel no gratitude towards the dispenser of them. Unless I see his kindness in them, I will not be grateful. It is true, that, in point of fact, gratitude often springs from the rendering of a benefit; but, lest we should

confound things which are different, let it be well observed, that this is only when the benefit serves as the indication of a kind purpose, or of a kind affection, on the part of him who hath granted it. And this may be proved, not merely by showing, that there may be no gratitude where there is a benefit, but also by showing, that there may be gratitude where there is no material benefit whatever. Just let the naked principle of kindness discover itself, and though it have neither the power, nor the opportunity of coming forth with the dispensation of any service, it is striking to observe, how upon the bare existence of this affection being known, it is met by a grateful feeling, on the part of him to whom it is directed; and what mighty augmentations may be given in this way, to the stock of enjoyment, and that, by the mere reciprocation of kindness begetting kindness. For, to send the expression of this kindness into another's bosom, it is not always necessary to do it on the vehicle of a positive donation. It may be conveyed by a look of benevolence; and thus it is, that by the mere feeling of cordiality, a tide of happiness may be made to circulate throughout all the individuals of an assembled company. Or it may be done by a very slight and passing attention, and thus it is, that the cheap services of courteousness, may spread such a charm over the face of a neighbourhood. Or it may be done by the very poorest member of human society; and thus it is, that the ready and sincere homage of attachment from such a man, may beam a truer felicity upon me, and call forth a livelier gratitude to him who has conferred it, than some splendid act of patronage on the part of a superior. Or it may be done by a Christian visitor in some of the humblest of our city lanes, who, without one penny to bestow on the children of want, may spread among them the simple conviction of her good will, and call down upon her person the voice of thankfulness and of blessing from all their habitations. And thus it is, that by good will creating good will, a pure and gladdening influence will at length go abroad over the face of our world, and mankind will be made to know the might and the mystery of that tie which is to bind them together into one family, and they will rejoice in the power of that secret charm which so height-

ens and so multiplies the pleasure of all the members of it; and, when transported from earth to heaven, they will still feel, that while it is to the benefits which God hath conferred that they owe the possession and all the privileges of existence; it is to a sense of the love which prompted these benefits, that they will owe the ecstatic charm of their immortality. It is the beaming kindness of God upon them, that will put their souls into the liveliest transports of gratitude and joy; and it is the reciprocation of this kindness on the part of those, who, while they have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, have fellowship also with one another, that will cause the joy of heaven to be full.

The distinction which we are now adverting to, is something more, than a mere shadowy refinement of speculation. It may be realized on the most trodden and ordinary path of human experience, and is, in fact, one of the most familiar exhibitions of genuine and usophisticated nature in those ranks of society where refinement is unknown. Let one man go over any given district of the city fully fraught with the *material* of benevolence; let him be the agent of some munificent subscription, and with nothing in his heart but just such affections, and such jealousies, and such thoughtful anxieties, about a right and equitable division, as belong to the general spirit of his office; let him leave some substantial deposit with each of the families; and then compute, if he can, the quantity of gratitude which he carries away with him. It were a most unkind reflection on the lower orders, and not more unkind than untrue, to deny that there will be the mingling of some gratitude, along with the clamour, and the envy, and the discontent, which are ever sure to follow in the train of such a ministration. It is not to discredit the poor, that we introduce our present observation; but to bring out, if possible, into broad and luminous exhibition, one of the finest sensibilities which adorns them. It is to let you know the high cast of character of which they are capable; and how the glow of pleasure which arises in their bosoms, when the eye of simple affection beams upon their persons, or upon their habitations, may not have one single taint of sordidness to debase it. And to prove this, just let another man go

over the same district, and in the train of the former visitation; conceive him unbacked by any public institution, to have nothing in his hand that might not be absorded by the needs of a single family, but, that utterly destitute, as he is, of the *materiel*, he has a heart charged and overflowing with the whole *morale* of benevolence. Just let him go forth among the people, without one other recommendation than an honest and undissembled good will to them; and let this good will manifest its existence, in any one of the thousand ways, by which it may be authenticated; and whether it be by the cordiality of his manners, or by his sympathy with their griefs, or by the nameless attentions and offices of civility, or by the higher aim of that kindness which points to the welfare of their immortality, and evinces its reality, by its ready and unwearied services among the young, or the sick, or the dying; just let them be satisfied of the one fact, that he is their friend, and that all their joys and all their sorrows are his own; he may be struggling with hardships and necessities as the poorest of them all; but poor as they are, they know what is in his heart, and well do they know how to value it; and from the voice of welcome, which meets him in the very humblest of their tenements; and from the smile of that heartfelt enjoyment, which his presence is ever sure to awaken, and from the influence of graciousness which he carries along with him into every house, and by which he lights up an honest emotion of thankfulness in the bosom of every family, may we gather the existence of a power, which worth alone, and without the accompaniment of wealth, can bestow; a power to sweeten and subdue, and tranquilize, which no money can purchase, which no patronage can create.

It will be readily acknowledged by all, that the most precious object in the management of a town, is to establish the reign of happiness and contentment among those who live in it. And it is interesting to mark the operations of those, who, without adverting to the principle that I now insist upon, think, that all is to be achieved, by the beggarly elements which enter into the arithmetic of ordinary business; who rear their goodly scheme upon the basis of sums and computations; and think that by an overwhelming discharge of the material of benevolence, they will

reach an accomplishment which the morale of benevolence alone is equal to. We are sure that it is not to mortify our men of grave, and official and calculating experience, that we tell them, how, with all their strength, and all their sagacity, they have only given their money for that which is not meat, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. It is to illustrate a principle of our common nature, so obvious, that to be recognized, it needs only to be spoken of. And it were well, if in so doing their thoughts could be led to the instrumentality of this principle, as the only way, in which they can redeem the failures of their by-gone experience; if they could be convinced, that the agents of a zealous and affectionate Christianity can alone do what all the influence of municipal weight and municipal wisdom cannot do; if they could be taught what the ministrations are, by which a pure and a responding gratitude, may be made to circulate throughout all our dwelling-places; if, in a word, while they profess to serve the poor, they could be led to respect the poor, to do homage to that fineness of moral temperament which belongs to them, and which hitherto seems to have escaped, altogether, the eye of civil or political superintendence; and they may rest assured, that let them give as much in the shape of munificence as they will, if they add not the love to the liberality of the Gospel, they will never soften one feature of unkindness, or chase away one exasperated feeling, from the hearts of a neglected population.

But, beside the degree of purity in which this principle may exist among the most destitute of our species, it is also of importance to remark the degree of strength, in which it actually exists among the most depraved of our species. And, on this subject, do we think that the venerable HOWARD has bequeathed to us a most striking and valuable observation. You know the history of this man's enterprises; how his doings, and his observations, were among the veriest outcasts of humanity,—how he descended into prison houses, and there made himself familiar with all that could most revolt or terrify, in the exhibition of our fallen nature; how, for this purpose, he made the tour of Europe; but instead of walking in the footsteps of other travellers, he toiled his painful and persevering way through these

receptacles of worthlessness ;—and, sound experimentalist as he was, did he treasure up the phenomena of our nature, throughout all the stages of misfortune, or depravity. We may well conceive the scenes of moral desolation that would often meet his eye; and that, as he looked to the hard, and dauntless, and defying aspect of criminality before him, he would sicken in despair of ever finding one remnant of a purer and better principle, by which he might lay hold of these unhappy men, and convert them into the willing and the consenting agents of their own amelioration. And yet such a principle he found, and found it, as he tells us, after years of intercourse, as the fruit of his greater experience, and his longer observation; and gives, as the result of it, that convicts, and that, among the most desperate of them all, are not ungovernable, and that there is a way of managing even them, and that the way is, without relaxing, in one iota, from the steadiness of a calm and resolute discipline, to treat them with tenderness, and to show them that you have humanity; and thus a principle, of itself so beautiful, that to expatiate upon it, gives in the eyes of some, an air of fantastic declamation to our argument, is actually deponed to, by an aged and most sagacious observer. It is the very principle of our text; and it would appear that it keeps a lingering hold of our nature, even in the last and lowest degree of human wickedness; and that when abandoned by every other principle, this may still be detected,—that even among the most hackneyed and most hardened of malefactors there is still about them a softer part which will give way to the demonstrations of tenderness: that this one ingredient of a better character is still found to survive the dissipation of all the others,—that, fallen as a brother may be, from the moralities which at one time adorned him, the manifested good-will of his fellow-man still carries a charm and an influence along with it; and that, therefore, there lies in this, an operation which, as no poverty can vitiate, so no depravity can extinguish.*

Now, this is the very principle which is brought into action,

* The operation of the same principle has, of late, been strikingly exemplified by Mrs. Fry, and her, coadjutors, in the prison at Newgate.

in the dealings of God with a whole world of malefactors. It looks, as if he confided the whole cause of our recovery, to the influence of a demonstration of good will. It is truly interesting to mark, what, in the devisings of his unsearchable wisdom, is the character which he has made to stand most visibly out, in the great scheme and history of our redemption: and surely if there be one feature of prominency more visible than another, it is the love of kindness. There appears to be no other possible way, by which a responding affection can be deposited in the heart of man. Certain it is, that the law of love cannot be carried to its ascendency over us by storm. Authority cannot command it. Strength cannot implant it. Terror cannot charm it into existence. The threatenings of vengeance may stifle, or they may repel, but they never can woo this delicate principle of our nature, into a warm and confiding attachment. The human heart remains shut, in all its receptacles, against the force of these various applications; and God, who knew what was in man, seems to have known, that in his dark and guilty bosom, there was but one solitary hold that he had over him; and that to reach it, he must just put on a look of graciousness, and tell us that he has no pleasure in our death, and manifest towards us the longings of a bereaved parent, and even humble himself to a suppliant in the cause of our return, and send a Gospel of peace into the world, and bid his messengers to bear throughout all its habitations, the tidings of his good-will to the children of men. This is the topic of his most anxious and repeated demonstration. This manifested good will of God to his creatures, is the band of love, and the cord of a man, by which he draws them. It is true, that from the inaccessible throne of his glory, we see no direct emanation of his tenderness upon us, from the face of the King who is invisible. But, as if to make up for this, he sent his Son into the world, and declared him to be God manifest in the flesh, and let us see, in his tears, and in his sympathies, and in all the recorded traits of his kindness, and gentleness, and love, what a God we have to deal with. It is true, that even in love to us, he did not let down one attribute of truth or of majesty which belonged to him. But, in love to us, he hath laid upon his own Son the burden of their vin-

dication;—and now, that every obstacle is done away; now, that the barrier which lay across the path of acceptance, is levelled by the power of him who travailed in the greatness of his strength for us; now, that the blood of atonement has been shed, and that the justice of God has been magnified, and that our iniquities have been placed on the great Sacrifice, and so borne away that there is no more mention of them: now, that with his dignity entire, and his holiness untainted, the door of heaven may be opened, and sinners be called upon to enter in,—is the voice of a friendly and beseeching God, lifted up without reserve, in the hearing of us all;—his love of kindness is published abroad among men;—and this one mighty principle of attraction is brought to bear upon a nature, that might have remained sullen and unmoved under every other application.

And, as God, in the measure of restoring a degenerate world unto himself, hath set in operation the very same principle as that which we have attempted to illustrate,—so the operation hath produced the very same result that we have ascribed to it. As soon as his love of kindness is believed, so soon does the love of gratitude spring up in the heart of the believer. As soon as man gives up his fear and his suspicion of God, and discerns him to be his friend, so soon does he render him the homage of a willing and affectionate loyalty. There is not a man who can say, I have known and believed the love which God hath to us, who cannot say also, I have loved God because he first loved me. There has not, we will venture to affirm, been a single example in the whole history of the church, of a man who had a real faith in the overtures of peace and of tenderness which are proposed by the Gospel, and who did not, at the same time, exemplify this attribute of the Christian faith, that it worketh by love.

It is thus that the faith, which recognizes God, as God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, lies at the turning point of conversion. In this way, and in this way alone, is there an inlet of communication open to the heart of man, for that principle of love to God, which gives all its power and all its character to the new obedience of the gospel. So soon as a man really knows the truth, and no man can be said to know

what he does not believe, will this truth enthrone a new affection in his bosom, which will set him free from the dominion of all such affections as are earthly and rebellious. The whole style and spirit of his obedience are transformed. The man now walks with the vigour, and the confidencc, and the enlargement, of one who is set at liberty. It looks a mysterious revolution in the general eye of the world. But the fact is, that from the moment a sinner closes with the overtures of the gospel, from that moment a new era is established in the history of his mind altogether. As soon as he sees what he never saw before, so soon does he feel what he never felt before. Without the faith of the gospel he may serve God in the spirit of bondage : he may be driven, by the terrors of his law, into many outward and reluctant conformities ; he may even, without the influence of these terrors, maintain a thousand decencies of tastes, and custom, and established observation. But he is still an utter stranger to the first and the greatest commandment. There may be the homage of many a visible movement with the body, while, in the whole bent and disposition of the soul there is nothing but aversion, and distance, and enmity. Even the word of the gospel may be addressed, Sabbath after Sabbath, and that too, to hearers who offer no positive resistance to it,—but coming to them only in word, they remain as motionless and unimpressed as ever, and with an utter dormancy in their hearts, as to any responding movement of gratitude. The heart, in fact, remains unapproachable in every other way, but by the gospel coming to it, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. Then is it, that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts ; and that the gospel approves itself to be his power, and his wisdom, to the sanctification of all who believe in it.

Now, the theologians to whom we allude, have set up obstacles in the way of such a process. They hold a language about the disinterested love of God, and demand this at the very outset of a man's conversion, in such a way, as may retard his entrance upon a life of faith,—as may have prolonged the darkness of many an inquirer, and have kept him in a state of despair, whom a right understanding of the gospel would have

relieved of all his doubts, and all his perplexities. They seem to look on the love of gratitude, as having in it a taint of selfishness. They say that to love a being, because he is my benefactor, is little better than to love the benefit which he has conferred upon me; and that this, instead of any evidence of a state of grace, is the mere effect of an appetite which belongs essentially and universally to the animal state of nature. They appear to have missed the distinction, between the love that is felt towards the benefit itself, and the love of gratitude that is felt towards the author of it; though certainly there are here two objects of affection altogether distinct from each other.

My liking for the gift is a different phase of mind from my liking for the giver. In the one exercise, I am looking to a different object, and my thoughts have a different employment, from what they have in the other. Had I an affection for the gift, without an affection for the giver, then might I evince an unmixed selfishness of character. But I may have both; and my affection for the giver may be purely in obedience to that law of reciprocity, whereby if another likes me, I am disposed by that circumstance, and by that alone, to like him back again. The gift may serve merely the purpose of an indication. It is the medium through which I perceive the love that another bears me. But it is possible for me to perceive this through another medium, and, in this case, the rising gratitude of my bosom might look a purer and more disinterested emotion. But the truth is, that it retains the very same character, though a gift has been the occasion of its excitement,—and, therefore, it ought not to have been so assimilated to the principle of selfishness. It ought not to have been so discouraged, and made the object of suspicion, at that moment of its evolution, when the returning sinner looks by faith to the truths and the promises of the gospel, and sees in them the tenderness of an inviting God. It ought not to have been so stigmatized, as a mere portion of his unrenewed nature; for, in truth, it will heighten and grow upon him, with every step in the advancement of his moral renovation. It will be one of the gracefullest of his accomplishments in this world; and so far from being extinguished in the next, along with the baser and more selfish af-

fections of our constitution, it will pour an animating spirit into many a song of ecstacy, to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. The law of love begetting love, will obtain in eternity. Like the law of reciprocal attraction in the material world, it will cement the immutable and everlasting order of that moral system, which is to emerge with the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The love which emanates from the throne of God, upon his surrounding family, will call back a voice of blessing, and thanksgiving, and glory, from all the members of it. And the love which his children bear to each other, will, in like manner, be reflected and multiplied. All that is wrong in selfishness will be there unknown. But gratitude, so far from being counted an unseemly companion for paradise; will be one chief ingredient in the fullness of its joy; one of the purest and most exquisite of those pleasures, which are for evermore.

The first consideration then, upon which we would elevate gratitude to the rank of a virtue, is, that in its object, it is altogether distinct from selfishness. It is enough, indeed, to dissolve the imagination of any kindred character between selfishness and gratitude, that the man without selfishness, seems to the eye of a beholder, as standing on a lofty eminence of virtue: The man without gratitude, is held, by all, to be a monster of deformity. Give me a man who seizes with ravenous appropriation all that I have to bestow,—and who hoards it, or feeds upon it, or, in any way rejoices over it, without one grateful movement of his heart towards me,—and you lay before me a character, not merely unlike, but diametrically opposite, to the character of him who obtains the very same gift, and perhaps, derives from the use of it, an equal, or a greater degree of enjoyment, to the sensitive part of his nature,—but who, in addition to all this, has thought, and affection, and the higher principles of his nature, excited by the consideration of the giver; and looks to the manifested love that appears in this act of generosity; and is touched with love back again; and, under the influence of this responding affection, conceives the kindest wishes, and pours out the warmest prayers, for the interest of

his benefactor, and shows him all the symptoms of friendship, and surrounds him with all its services.

The second consideration upon which we would elevate gratitude to the rank of a pure virtue, has already been glanced at. Were it not a virtue, it would have no place in heaven. Did it only appertain to the unrenewed part of our nature, it would find no admittance among the saints in paradise. But one of the songs of the redeemed, is a song of gratitude.

And, thirdly, by looking more closely to this affection, both in its origin and in its exercises, we shall perceive in it, more clearly, all the characteristics of virtue.

Let it be remarked then, that an affection may simply exist, and yet be no evidence of any virtue, or of any moral worth in the holder of it. I may look on a beautiful prospect, and be drawn out to an involuntary sentiment of admiration. Or, I may look on my infant child, and, without one effort of volition, feel a parental tenderness towards it. Or, I may be present at a scene of distress, and without choosing or willing it to be so, I may be moved to the softest compassion. And, in this way, I may have a character made up of many affections, some of which are tasteful, some of which are most amiable in themselves, and some of which are most useful to society; and yet, none of which may possess the smallest portion of the essential character of virtue. They may be brought into exercise, without any working of a sense of duty whatever. One of those we have specified—the instinctive affection of parents for their young, is exemplified in all its strength, and in all its tenderness, by the inferior animals. And, therefore, if we want to know what that is which constitutes the character of virtue, or moral worth, in a human being, we must look to something else, than to the mere existence of certain affections, however valuable they may prove to others, or whatever gracefulness they may shed over the complexion of him who possesses them.

Now, it would be raising a collateral into a main topic, were we to enter upon a full explanation of the matter that has now been suggested. And we shall, therefore, briefly remark, that to give the character of virtue to any grace of the inner man, the will, acting under a sense of duty, must, in some way or

other, have been concerned, in the establishment, or in the continuance of it; and that to give the same character of virtue to a deed of the outer man, the will must also be concerned. A deed is only virtuous in as far as it is voluntary; and it is only in proportion to the share which the will has in the performance of it, and the will impelling us to do, what we are persuaded ought to be done, that there can be awarded, to the deed in question, any character of moral estimation.

This will explain what the circumstances are, under which the gratitude of a human being may at one time be an instinct, and at another time a virtue. I may enter the house of an individual who is an utter stranger to the habit of acting under a sense of duty; who is just as much the creature of mere impulse, as the animals beneath him; and who, therefore, though some of these impulses are more characteristic of his condition as a man, and most subservient to the good of his fellows, may be considered as possessing no virtue whatever, in the strict and proper sense of the term. But he has the property of being affected by external causes. And I, by some ministration of friendship, may flash upon his mind such an overpowering conviction of the good-will that I bear him, as to affect him with a sense of gratitude even unto tears. The moral obligation of gratitude may not be present to his mind at all. But the emotion of gratitude comes into his heart unbidden, and finds its vent in acknowledgments, and blessings, on the person of his benefactor. We would say, of such a person, that he possesses a happier original constitution than another, who in the same circumstances, would not be so powerfully or so tenderly affected. And yet he may have hitherto evinced nothing more than the workings of a mere instinct, which springs spontaneously within him, and gives its own impulse to his words and his performances, without a sense of duty having any share in the matter, or without the will prompting the individual by any such consideration, as, let me do this thing because I ought to do it.

Let us now conceive the moral sense to be admitted to its share of influence over this proceeding. Let it be consulted on the question of what ought to be felt, and what ought to be done, by one being, when another evinces the love of kindness

towards him. A mere instinct may, in point of fact, draw out a return of love and of service back again. But it is the province of the moral sense to pronounce on the point of obligation, and we speak its universal suggestion, when we say, that the love of gratitude ought to be felt, and the services of gratitude ought to be rendered.

Now, to make this decision of the moral sense practically effectual, and, indeed, to make the moral sense have any thing to do with this question at all, the feeling of gratitude must, in some way or other, be dependent either for its existence, or its growth, or its continuance, upon the will; and the same will must also have a command over the services of gratitude. The moral sense, in fact, never interposes with any dictate, or with any declaration about the feelings, or the conduct of man, unless in so far as the will of man has an influence, and a power of regulation over them. It never makes the rate of the circulation of the blood a question of duty, because this is altogether an involuntary movement. And it never would have offered any authoritative intimation, about the way in which gratitude ought to be felt, or ought to be expressed, unless the will had had some kind of presiding sovereignty over both the degree and the workings of this affection.

The first way, then, in which the will may have to do with the love of gratitude, is by the putting forth of a desire for the possession of it. It may long to realize this moral accomplishment. It may hunger and thirst after this branch of righteousness. Even though it has not any such power under its command, as would enable it to fulfil such a volition, the volition itself has, upon it, the stamp and the character of virtue. The man who habitually wills to have in his heart a love of gratitude towards God, is a man at least of holy desires, if not of holy attainments. And, when we consider that a way has actually been established, in which the desire may be followed up by the attainment,—when we read of the promise given to those who seek after God,—when we learn the assurance that he will grant the heart's desire of those who will stir themselves up to lay hold of him,—when we think that prayer is the natural expression of desire for an object which man cannot reach, but

which God is both able and willing to confer upon him,—then do we see how the very existence of the love of gratitude may have had its pure and holy commencement, in such a habitude of the will as has the essential character of virtue engraven upon it. "Keep yourselves," says the Apostle, "in the love of God, by praying in the Holy Ghost."

But, again, there are certain doings of the mind, over which the will has a control, and by which the affection of gratitude may either be brought into being, or be sustained in lively and persevering exercise. At the bidding of the will, I can think of one topic, rather than of another. I can transfer my mind to any given object of contemplation. I can keep that object steadily in view, and make an effort to do so, when placed in such circumstances as might lead me to distraction or forgetfulness. And it is in this way that moral praise or moral responsibility, may be attached to the love of gratitude. Ere the heart can be moved by this affection to another, there must be in the mind a certain appropriate object, that is fitted to call it, and to keep it in existence,—and that object is the love of kindness which the other bears me. I may endeavour, and I may succeed in the endeavour, to hold this love of kindness in daily and perpetual remembrance. If the will have to do with the exercises of thought and memory, then the will may be responsible for the gratitude that would spring in my bosom, did I only think of the love of God, and that would continue with me in the shape of an habitual affection, did I only keep that love in habitual remembrance. It is thus that the forgetfulness of God is chargeable with criminality,—and it will appear a righteous thing in the day of judgment, when they, who are thus forgetful of him, shall be turned into hell. It is this which arms, with such a moral and condemnatory force, the expostulation he holds with Israel, "that Israel doth not know, that my people do not consider." It is because we like not to retain God in our knowledge, that our minds become reprobate;—and, on the other hand, it is by a continuous effort of my will, towards the thought of him, that I forget not his benefits. It is by the strenuousness of a voluntary act, that I connect the idea of an unseen benefactor, with all the blessings of my present lot, and all the anti-

cipations of my futurity. It is by a combat with the most urgent propensities of nature, that I am ever looking beyond this surrounding materialism, and setting God and his love before me all the day long.

There is no virtue, it is allowed, without voluntary exertion; but this is the very character which runs throughout the whole work and exercise of faith. To keep himself in the love of God is a habit, with the maintenance of which the will of man has most essentially to do, because it is at his will that he keeps himself in the thought of God's love towards him. To bid away from me such intrusions of sense, and of time, as would shut God out of my recollections; to keep alive the impression of him in the midst of bustle, and company, and worldly avocations; to recall the thought of him and of his kindness, under crosses, and vexations, and annoyances; to be still, and know that he is God, even when beset with temptations to impatience and discontent; never to lose sight of him, as merciful and gracious; and above all, never to let go my hold of that great Propitiation, by which, in every time of trouble, I have the privilege of access with confidence to my reconciled Father; these are all so many acts of faith, but they are just such acts as the will bears a share, and a sovereignty, in the performance of. And, as they are the very acts which go to aliment and to sustain the love of gratitude within me, it may be seen, how an affection which, in the first instance, may spring involuntarily, and be therefore regarded as a mere instinct of nature, or as bearing upon it a complexion of selfishness, may, in another view, have upon it a complexion of deepest sacredness, and be rendered unto God in the shape of a duteous and devoted offering from a voluntary agent, and be, in fact, the laborious result of a most difficult, and persevering, and pains-taking habit of obedience.

And if this be true of the mere sense of gratitude, it is still more obviously true of the services of gratitude. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" is the genuine language of this affection. It seeks to make a gratifying return of service, and that, under the feeling that it ought to do so. Or, in other words, do we behold that it is the will of man, prompted by a sense of duty, which leads him on to the obedience of

gratitude, and that the whole of this obedience is pervaded by the essential character of virtue. This is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments. This is the most gratifying return unto him, that ye do those things which are pleasing in his sight. And thus it is, that the love of gratitude may be vindicated in its character of moral worth, from its first commencement in the heart to its ultimate effect on the walk and conversation. It is originally distinct from selfishness in its object; and it derives a virtuousness at its very outset, from the aspirations of a soul bent on the acquirement of it, because bent on being what it ought to be; and it is sustained, both in life and in exercise, by such habits of thought as are of voluntary cultivation; and it nobly sustains an aspect of moral righteousness onwards to the final result of its operation on the character, by setting him who is under its power, on a career of obedience to God, and introducing him to an arduous contest of principle, with all the influences of sense and of the world.

If, to render an affection virtuous, the will acting under a sense of duty, should be concerned either in producing or in perpetuating it; then the love of moral esteem coming into the heart, as an involuntary sensation, may, in certain circumstances, have as little of the character of virtue as the love of gratitude. In this respect, both these affections are upon a footing with each other; and the first ought not to have been exalted at the expense of the second. That either be upheld within us in our present state, there must, in fact, be the putting forth of the same voluntary control over the thoughts and contemplations of the understanding; the same active exercise of faith; the same laborious resistance to all those urgencies of sense which would expel from the mind the idea of an unseen and spiritual object; the same remembrance of God sustained by effort, and prayer, and meditation.

II. We now feel ourselves in a condition to speak of the Gospel, in its free and gratuitous character; to propose its blessings as a gift; to hold out the pardon, and the strength, and all the other privileges which it proclaims to believers, as so many articles for their immediate acceptance; to make it known to men that they are not to delay their compliance with

the overtures of mercy, till the disinterested love of God arises in their hearts ; but that they have a warrant for entering even now, into instant reconciliation with God. Nor are we to dread the approach of any moral contamination, though when, after their eyes are opened to the marvellous spectacle of a pleading, and offering, and beseeching God, holding out eternal life unto the guilty, through the propitiation which his own Son hath made for them, they should, from that moment, open their whole soul, to the influences of gratitude, and love the God who thus hath first loved them.

We conclude then with remarking, that the whole of this argument gives us another view of the importance of faith. We do not say all for it that we ought, when we say that by faith we are justified in the sight of God. By faith also our hearts are purified. It is in fact the primary and the presiding principle of regeneration. It brings the heart into contact with that influence, by which the love of gratitude is awakened. The love of God to us, if it is not believed, will exert no more power over our affections, than if it were a nonentity. They are the preachers of faith, then, who alone deal out to their hearers, the elementary and pervading spirit of the Christian morality. And the men who have been stigmatized as the enemies of good works, are the very men, who are most sedulously employed in depositing within you, that good seed which has its fruit unto holiness. We are far from asserting, that the agency of grace is not concerned, in every step of that process, by which a sinner is conducted from the outset of his conversion to the state of being perfect, and complete in the whole will of God. But there is a harmony between the processes of grace and of nature ; and in the same manner, as in human society, the actual conviction of a neighbour's good-will to me, takes the precedency in point of order of any returning movement of gratitude on my part, so, in the great concerns of our fellowship with God, my belief that he loves me, is an event prior and preparatory to the event of my loving him. So that the primary obstacle to the love of God is not the want of human gratitude, but the want of human faith.

The reason why man is not excited to the love of God by the

revelation of God's love to him, is just because he does not believe that revelation. This is the barrier which lies between the guilty, and their offended Lawgiver. It is not the ingratitude of man, but the incredulity of man, that needs, in the first instance, to be overcome. It is the sullenness, and the hardness, and the obstinacy of unbelief which stands as a gate of iron, between him and his enlargement. Could the kindness of God, in Christ Jesus, be seen by him, the softening of a kindness back again, would be felt by him. And let us cease to wonder, then, at the preachers of the gospel, when they lay upon belief all the stress of a fundamental operation;—when they lavish so much of their strength on the establishment of a principle, which is not only initial, but indispensable; when they try so strenuously to charm that into existence, without which all the elements of a spiritual obedience are in a state of dormancy or of death;—when they labour at the only practicable way, by which the heart of a sinner can be touched, and attracted towards God;—when they try so repeatedly, to hold and to fasten him, by that link which God himself hath put into their hands—and bring the mighty principle to bear upon their hearers, which any one of us may exemplify upon the poorest, and by which both HOWARD and FRY have tried with success, to soften and to reclaim the most worthless of mankind.

This also suggests a practical direction to Christians, for keeping themselves in the love of God. They must keep themselves in the habit, and in the exercise of faith. They must hold fast that conviction in their minds, the presence of which is indispensable to the keeping of that affection in their hearts. This is one of the methods recommended by the apostle Jude, when he tells his disciples to build themselves up on their most holy faith. This direction to you is both intelligible and practicable. Keep in view the truths which you have learned. Cherish that belief of them which you already possess. Recall them to your thoughts, and, in general, they will not come alone, but they will come accompanied by their own power, and their own evidence. You may as well think of maintaining a steadfast attachment to your friend, after you have expunged from your memory all the demonstrations of kindness he ever

bestowed upon you, as think of keeping your heart in the love of God, after the thoughts and contemplations of the gospel have fled from it. It is just by holding these fast, and by building yourself up on their firm certainty, that you preserve this affection. Any man, versant in the matters of experimental religion, knows well what it is when a blight and a barrenness come over the mind, and when, under the power of such a visitation, loses all sensibility towards God. There *is* at that time a hiding of his countenance, and you lose your hold of the manifestation of that love, wherewith God loved the world, even when he sent his only begotten Son into it, that we might live through him. You will recover a right frame, when you recover your hold of this consideration. If you want to recall the strayed affection to your heart—recall to your mind the departed object of contemplation. If you want to reinstate the principle of love in your bosom—reinstate faith, and it will work by love. It is got at through the medium of believing, and trusting;—Nor do we know a more summary, and, at the same time, a more likely direction for living a life of holy and heavenly affection, than that you should live a life of faith.

SERMON XI.

THE AFFECTION OF MORAL ESTEEM TOWARDS GOD.

PSALM XXVII. 4.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

In our last discourse we adverted to the effect of a certain theological speculation about love, in darkening the freeness of the gospel, and intercepting the direct influence of its overtures and its calls on the mind of an inquirer. Ere we can conceive the love of gratitude towards another, we must see in him the love of kindness towards us; and thus, by those who have failed to distinguish between a love of the benefit, and a love of the benefactor, has the virtue of gratitude been resolved into the love of ourselves. And they have thought that there must surely be a purer affection than this, to mark the outset of the great transition from sin unto righteousness; and the one they have specified is the disinterested love of God. They have given to this last affection a place so early, as to distract the attention of an inquirer from that which is primary. The invitation of "come and buy without money, and without price," is not heard by the sinner along with the exaction of loving God for himself, —of loving him, on account of his excellencies,—of loving him, because he is lovely. Let us, therefore, try to ascertain whether even this love of moral esteem is not subordinate to the faith of the gospel; and whether it follows, that because this affection forms so indispensable a part of godliness, faith should, on that account, be deposed from the place of antecedency which belongs to it.

And here let it be most readily and most abundantly conceded, that we are not perfect and complete, in the whole of God's will, till the love of moral esteem be in us, as well as the love of gratitude,—till that principle, of which, by nature, we are utterly destitute, be made to arise in our hearts, and to have there a thorough establishment, and operation,—till we love God, not merely on account of his love to our persons, but on account of the glory, and the residing excellence, which meet the eye of the spiritual beholder, upon his own character. We are not preparing for heaven,—we shall be utterly incapable of sharing in the noblest of its enjoyments,—we shall not feel ourselves surrounded by an element of congeniality in paradise,—there will be no happiness for us, even in the neighbourhood of the throne of God, and with the moral lustre of the Godhead made visible to our eyes, if we are strangers to the emotion of loving God for himself,—if additional altogether, to the consideration that God is looking with complacency upon me, I do not feel touched and attracted by the beauties of his character, when I look with the eye of contemplation towards him. I am without the most essential of all moral accomplishments in myself, if I am without the esteem of moral accomplishments in another; and if my heart be of such a constitution that nothing in the character of God can draw my admiration, or my regard, to him—then, though admitted within the portals of the city which hath foundations, and removed from the torments of hell, I am utterly unfit for the joys and the exercises of heaven. I may spend an eternity of exemption from pain, but without one rapture of positive felicity to brighten it. Heaven, in fact, would be a wilderness to my heart; and, in the midst of its acclaiming throng would I droop, and be in heaviness under a sense of perpetual dissolution.

And let this convince us of the mighty transition, that must be described by the men of this world, ere they are meet for the other world of the spirits of just men made perfect. It is not speaking of this transition, in terms too great and too lofty, to say, that they must be born again, and made new creatures, and called out of darkness into a light that is marvellous. The truth is, that out of the pale of vital Christianity, there is not to be

found among all the varieties of taste, and appetite, and sentimental admiration, any love for God as he is,—any relish for the holiness of his character,—any echoing testimony, in the bosom of alienated man, to what is graceful, or to what is venerable in the character of the Deity. He may be feelingly alive to the beauties of what is seen, and what is sensible. The scenery of external nature may charm him. The sublimities of a surrounding materialism may kindle and dilate him with images of grandeur. Even the moralities of a fellow-creature may engage him; and these, with the works of genius, may fascinate him into an idolatrous veneration of human power, or of human virtue. But while he thus luxuriates and delights himself with the forms of derived excellence, there is no sensibility in his heart towards God. He rather prefers to keep by the things that are made, and, surrounded by them, to bury himself into a forgetfulness of his Maker. He is most in his element, when in feeling, or in employment, he is most at a distance from God. There is a coldness, or a hatred, or a terror, which mixes up with all his contemplations of the Deity; and gives to his mind a kind of sensitive recoil from the very thought of him. He would like to live always in the world, and be content with such felicity as it can give, and cares not, could he only get what his heart is set upon here, and be permitted to enjoy it for ever, though he had no sight of God, and no fellowship with him through eternity. The event to which, of all others, he looks forward with the most revolting sense of aversion and dismay, is that event which is to bring him into a nearer contact with God,—which is to dissolve his present close relationship with the creature, and to conduct his disembodied spirit into the immediate presence of the Creator. There is nothing in death, in grim, odious, terrific death, that he less desires, or is more afraid of, than a nearer manifestation of the Deity. The world, in truth, the warm and the well known world, is his home; and the men who live in it, and are as regardless of the Divinity as himself, form the whole of his companionship. Were it not for the fear of hell, he would shrink from heaven as a dull and melancholy exile. All its songs of glory to him who sitteth on the throne, would be to his heart a burden

and a weariness;—and thus it is, that the foundation of every natural man has its place in that perishable earth, from which death will soon carry him away, and which the fiery indignation of God will at length burn up; and as to the being who endureth for ever, and with whom alone he has to do, he sees in him no form nor comeliness, nor no beauty that he should desire him.

Now, is not this due to the darkness of nature, as well as to the depravity of nature? There is in our diseased constitution, a spiritual blindness to the excellencies of the Godhead, as well as a spiritual disrelish for them. The truth is, that these two elements go together in the sad progress of human degeneracy. Man liked not to retain God in his knowledge, and God gave him over to a reprobate mind; and again, man walking in vanity, and an enemy to God by wicked works, had his understanding darkened, and was visited with ignorance, and blindness of heart. We do not apprehend God, and therefore it is that we must be renewed in the knowledge of him, ere we can be formed again to the love of him. The natural man can no more admire the Deity through the obscurities in which he is shrouded, than he can admire a landscape which he never saw, and which at the time of his approach to it, is wrapped in the gloom of midnight. He can no more, with every effort to stir up his faculties to lay hold of him, catch an endearing view of the Deity, than his eye can by straining, penetrate its way through a darkened firmament, to the features of that material loveliness which lies before him, and around him. It must be lighted up to him, ere he can love it, or enjoy it, and tell us what the degree of his affection for the scenery would be, if instead of being lighted up by the peaceful approach of a summer morn, it were to blaze into sudden visibility, with all its cultivation and cottages, by the fires of a bursting volcano. Tell us, if all the glory and gracefulness of the landscape which had thus started into view, would charm the beholder for a moment, from the terrors of his coming destruction! Tell us, if it is possible for a sentient being, to admit another thought in such circumstances as these, than the thought of his own preservation. O would not the sentiment of fear about himself, cast out every sentiment of

love for all that he now saw, and were he only safe could look upon with ecstacy?—and let the beauty be as exquisite as it may, would not all the power and pleasure of its enchantments fly away from his bosom, were it only seen through the glowing fervency of elements that threatened to destroy him?

Let us now conceive, that through that thick spiritual darkness by which every child of nature is encompassed, there was forced upon him a view of the countenance of the Deity,—that the perfections of God were made visible,—and that the character on which the angels of paradise gaze with delight, because they there behold all the lineaments of moral grandeur, and moral loveliness, were placed before the eye of his mind, in bright and convincing manifestation. It is very true, that on what he would be thus made to see, all that is fair and magnificent are assembled,—that whatever of greatness, or whatever of beauty can be found in creation, is but a faint and shadowy transcript of that original substantial excellence, which resides in the conceptions of him who is the fountain of being,—that all the pleasing of goodness, and all the venerable of worth, and all the sovereign command of moral dignity meet and are realised on the person of God,—that through the whole range of universal existence, there cannot be devised a single feature of excellence, which does not serve to enrich the character of him who sustains all things, and who originated all things. No wonder that the pure eye of an angel takes in such fulness of pleasure from a contemplation so ravishing. But let all this burst upon the eye of a sinner, and let the truth and the righteousness of God out of Christ stand before it in visible array, along with the other glories of character which belong to him. The love of moral esteem, you may say, ought to arise in his bosom;—but it cannot. The affection is in such circumstances impossible. The man is in terror. And he can no more look with complacency upon his God, than he can delight himself with the fair forms of a landscape, opened to his view, by the flashes of an impending volcano. He cannot draw an emotion so sweet, and delightful as love, from the view of that countenance, on which he beholds a purpose of vengeance against himself, as one of the children of iniquity. The fear which hath torment

casteth out this affection altogether. There is positively no room for it within the bosom of a sentient being along with the dread, and the alarm by which he is agitated. It is this which explains the recoil of his sinful nature, from the thought of God. The sense of guilt comes into his heart, and the terrors and the agitations of guilt come along with it. It is because he sees the justice of God frowning upon him, and the truth of God pledged to the execution of its threatenings against him, and the holiness of God which cannot look upon him without abhorrence, and all the sacred attributes of a nature that is jealous, and unchangeable, leagued against him for his everlasting destruction. He cannot love the Being, with the very idea of whom there is mixed up a sense of danger, and a dread of condemnation, and all the images of a wretched eternity. We cannot love God, so long as we look upon him as an enemy armed to destroy us. Ere we love him, we must be made to feel the security, and the enlargement of one who knows himself to be safe. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear, terrify me,—and then may I love him and not fear him ; but it is not so with me.

But let him who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of his own glory, in the face of Jesus Christ,—let us only look upon him as God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses,—let him without expunging the characters of truth, and majesty, from that one aspect of perfect excellence which belongs to him,—let him in his own unsearchable wisdom devise a way, by which he can both bring them out in the eye of sinners with brighter illustration, and make these sinners feel, that they are safe ;—let him lift off from the men of this guilty world, the burden of his violated law, and cause it to be borne by another who can magnify that law, and make it honourable,—let him publish a full release from all its penalties, but in such a way, as that the truth which proclaimed them, and the justice which should execute them, shall remain untainted under the dispensation of mercy,—let him instead of awaking the sword of vengence against us, awake it against a sufferer of such worth and such dignity, that his

blood shall be the atonement of a world, and by pouring out his soul unto the death, he shall make the pardon of the transgressor meet, and be at one with the everlasting righteousness of God, —in a word, instead of the character of God being lighted up to the eye of the sinner, by the fire of his own indignation, let it through the demonstration of the Spirit be illustrated, and shone upon, by the mild, but peaceful light of the Sun of righteousness, and then may the sinner look in peace, and safety, on the manifested character of the Godhead. Delivered from the burden of his fears, he may now open his whole heart to the influences of affection. And that love of moral esteem, which before the entrance of the faith of the gospel, the sense of condemnation was sure to scare away, is now free to take its place beside the love of gratitude, and to arise along with it, in the offering of one spiritual sacrifice to a reconciled Father.

Thus, then, it would appear, that the love of moral esteem is in every way as much posterior, and subordinate to faith, as is the love of gratitude. That we may be able to love God, either according to the one or the other of its modifications, we must *first* know that God loved us. We cannot harbour this affection in any one shape whatever, so long as there is the suspicion, and the dread of a yet unsettled controversy between us and God. Peace with our offended Lawgiver, is not the fruit of our love, but of our faith;—and faith if it be a reality, and not a semblance, worketh by love. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And we love much when we know, and believe, that our sins are forgiven us.

God did not wait for any returning affection on the part of a guilty world, ere he felt an affection for it himself. At that period when he so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son into it,—did it exhibit the spectacle of an immense prison-house of depravity. Among the men of it, there was friendship one for another, but there was one unalleviated character of enmity against God. Measuring themselves by themselves, there was often a high mutual esteem for such accomplishments, as were in demand for the good of society;—but that which is highly esteemed among men, is in God's sight an abomination; and when brought to the measure of that univer-

sal righteousness which forms the standard and rule of Heaven's government, was it found that our species, had through all its generations broken off from their allegiance, and stood at as wide a distance from the obedient, and unfallen creation, as does a colony of convicts, from the country which has cast them out of its borders. And it was at such a time, when the world liked not to retain God in their knowledge,—when all flesh had corrupted their ways,—when there was none seeking after God,—when there was not the thought, or the wish, of a movement to him back again, that he looked with pity on our fallen race, and in the fulness of time, sent his Son into the world to seek and to save us.

And the same is true of every individual to whom the overtures of reconciliation are proposed. God does not wait for any change of affection in our heart, ere we accept of pardon at his hands. But he asks one and all of us now to accept of pardon, and to submit our heart and character to the influences of that grace which he is ready to bestow upon us. In the gospel he proclaims a pardon ready made for you,—a deed of amnesty which he is even now stretching out for your acceptance, a preventing offer of mercy, of which if you believe the reality, you will feel that he is your friend, and in which feeling you will not be disappointed. He does not expect from you the love of gratitude, till you have known, and believed the great things that he hath done for you. But he expects from you the offering of an homage to his truth. He does not expect from you the love of moral esteem, till, released from the terror of having him for your enemy, you may contemplate with all the tranquil calmness of conscious safety, the glories and the graces of his manifested character. But he expects from you faith in his declaration, that he is not your enemy,—that he has no pleasure in your death,—that in Christ he is beseeching you to be reconciled,—and stretching out to you the arms of invitation.

The first matter on hand, then, between God and sinners, in the work of making reconciliation, is, that they believe in him. It is, that the tidings of great joy shall fall upon them with credit, and acceptance. It is, that they count the sayings of the word of this life to be faithful sayings. It is, that they put faith

in the record which God hath given of his Son, which if they do, they will believe that God hath given them eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.

There is a certain speculation about the disinterested love of God, which has served to darken and to embarrass this process. It has cast an unmerited stigma on the love of gratitude. But its worst effect, by far, is, that it has impeded the freeness of the overtures of the gospel. It has perplexed the outset of many an inquirer. It has made him search in his own mind for the evidences of an affection, which he never can meet with, till he embrace the offers, and rely upon the promises of the New Testament. It has deposed faith from that post of presiding supremacy which belongs to it, and shifted from its place that great principle on which both the love of gratitude, and the love of moral esteem are suspended.

Let us cease to wonder, then, why faith occupies so much the station of a preliminary in the New Testament. It is the great starting point, as it were, of Christian discipleship. Grant but this principle, and love, with all the vigour, and all the alacrity which it gives to obedience, will emerge from its operation. There is no other way, in fact, of charming love into existence; and the gratitude which devotes me to the service of a reconciled God, and the love of his character, which makes me meet for the enjoyment of him in heaven, can only arise in my bosom after I have believed.

Let this consideration shut you up unto the faith. Let it exalt in your estimation, the mighty importance of a principle, without which there can neither be any sanctification here, nor any salvation hereafter. Think it not enough that you import it into your mind as a bare existence. Know what it is to put it into habitual exercise, to dwell upon the truths which it embraces, and to submit, in feeling and practice, to their genuine operation. This is the only way in which you can ever live a life of faith on the Son of God,—or live by the power of a world to come,—or keep yourselves in the love of God, seeing that it is only when you know and believe that God first loved you, that you can be made to love him.

In the progress of these observations, a few thoughts have occurred, which we trust may be deemed of sufficient importance to be brought forward,—and which we bring forward now, as supplementary to the whole argument.

It will have been remarked, that we do not consider man as altogether incapable of the love of moral esteem towards any being whatever. There are certain virtues of character which do call forth the admiration and the tenderness, even of our diseased nature, when they reside somewhere else than in the person of the Deity. Let our depravity be what it may, it were in the face of all observation to affirm, that man does not love the truth rather than falsehood, and compassion rather than cruelty, in a fellow-man,—and the interesting question comes to be, how is it that these qualities appear to lose all the force which naturally belongs to them, of attracting our regard, so as to awaken no such sentiment towards God, though they be exemplified by him, in a degree that is infinite?

It will help us, in part, to resolve this question, if we conceive of our man of moral virtues, that his very truth, and justice, and compassion, lead him, in the defence of wronged or calumniated innocence, to turn the whole force of his indignation on the head of an oppressor; and then think of the feeling which will arise, of consequence, in the heart of the latter. It will be a feeling of hatred and antipathy. And yet we do not see far into the secrecies of the human constitution, if we do not perceive, that, in perfect consistency with this feeling of personal dislike to the man of virtue, who is hostile to him, there may exist, even in his vitiated soul, the love of moral esteem toward virtue residing in some other quarter, or exemplified by some other individual. Instead of this virtue being realized on the person of one who is an enemy to myself, let it be offered by description to my notice, in the person of one who lives in a distant country, or who lived in a distant age, and let the thought of my particular adversary be not offensively suggested to my mind by such a contemplation,—and I, with all those depravities which have provoked the resentment of my upright neighbour against me, and have called forth in my heart

a corresponding hatred towards him, will offer the homage of my regard and reverence towards the picture of moral excellence, that is thus set before me. This may look an anomalous exhibition of our nature; but it certainly is not more so, than the well-known fact of a slave proprietor, at one time wreaking his caprice and his cruelty on the living men who are around him, and at another weeping, in all the softness of pathetic emotion, over the distresses of a fictitious narrative. Distress in one quarter may move our pity. Distress in another may be inflicted by our own hand, to glut our vindictive propensities. Worth, in the person of one who is indifferent, and still more of one who is friendly, may call forth our warm and honest acknowledgments. Worth in the person of another, the very principles of whose character have moved him to irritate our pride, or to wound our selfishness, may turn him into the object of our most passionate, determined, and unrelenting hostility.

And thus it is, that I may have a natural taste for several of the virtues which enter into the Godhead, and at the same time, may have a hatred towards the person of the Godhead.—This natural taste may be regarded by some, as a predisposing element in my heart towards the love of God; but so long as I view him armed in righteousness to destroy me, will this as effectually repress the embryo affection, as if still it were fast slumbering in the depths of nonentity. It is willingly admitted, that there are certain partial sketches of the character of the Deity, which, if offered to our notice, in a state of separation from his anger against us the children of disobedience, would kindle in our bosoms a feeling of tasteful admiration. But the dread, or the suspicion of his anger absorbs this feeling altogether; and however much we may bear the semblance of love for his character, when we look to certain traits of it in a detached and broken exhibition,—yet this is perfectly consistent with the fact, that the natural mind hates the person of the Deity,—that the natural mind is enmity against God. And this ought to convince us, that even though there should be predisposing elements of love to him for his worth, it is still indispensable, in order to change our hatred into affection, that we should look upon God as having ceased from his anger, or that

we should see him arrayed in all the tenderness of offered and inviting friendship. There is a spell by which these elements are fastened, and which can never be done away, till God woo me to friendship and confidence, by an exhibition of good will.

Faith in the cross of Christ, is the primary step of this approximation. To call for a disinterested affection towards God, from one who looks upon God as an adversary, and that even though there should be in his bosom the undeveloped seeds of regard to the worth or character of the Supreme, is to make a demand on a sentient being, which, by his very constitution, he is unable to meet or to satisfy. And is not this demand still more preposterous, when it comes from a quarter where the depravity of man is held to be so entire, that not one latent or predisposing element towards the love of God is ascribed to him? Is it not a still vainer expectation to think, in such hopeless circumstances as these, that ere man seizes the gift of redemption, he shall import into his character the grace of a pure and spiritual affection; that with the terror of his bosom yet unpacified, and the countenance of God upon him as unrelenting as ever, there shall arise, in the midst of all this agitation, a love to that Being, the very thought of whom brings a sense of insecurity along with it; or that a guilty creature, who, even if he had in a state of dormancy within him the principles of moral regard to the Divinity, could not, under the burden of wrath still unappeased, charm these principles, out of the state of their inaction, —that he, even were he utterly destitute of these principles, should be able, under this burden, to charm them out of the state of non-existence?

And this, by the way, may serve to show the whole amount of that tasteful sentimentalism, in virtue of which, a transient but treacherous and hollow regard towards the Divinity, may be detected in the hearts of those who nauseate the whole spirit and contents of the Gospel. They admit into their contemplation only as much of the character of God, as may serve to make out a tender or an engaging exhibition of him. They may leave entire the ground-work of his natural attributes; but, in every survey they take of the moral complexion of the Godhead, they refuse to look to all his moral attributes put togeth-

er, and only fasten their regard upon one of them, even the attribute of indulgence. They cannot endure the view of his whole character; and should this view ever intrude itself, it puts to flight all the pathos and elegance of mere natural piety. Truth, as directed against themselves; holiness, as refusing to dwell in peaceful or approving fellowship with themselves; justice, as committed to a sentence of severe and inflexible retribution upon themselves,—all these are out of their contemplation at that moment, when the votaries of a poetical theism feel towards their imagined deity an evanescent glow of affection or reverence. But truth and conscience are ever meddling with this enjoyment; and piety resting on so frail and partial a foundation, never can attain an habitual ascendency over the character; and what at the best is fictitious, does not, and ought not, to have more than a rare and little hour of emotion given to it; and this may explain how it is, that with the very same individual, there may be both an occasional recurrence of devotional feeling, and a life of rooted and practical ungodliness. An illusory representation of God will no more draw away our affections from the world, or engage us in the solid and experimental business of obedience to its Maker, than the flippancy of a novel will practically influence the habits of nature, or of society. And thus it is, that the religion which is apart from Christianity, falls as far short of true religion, as the humanity we have just quoted, falls short of true humanity.

But to return. We have already said, that even though there did exist in the heart of man a native regard to certain ingredients of worth in the character of the Divinity, a previous exhibition of good will is still essential, that the person of the Divinity may be endeared to him. And the argument for such a priority, becomes much stronger, when it is made out, on a farther attention to this matter, that there is, in fact, no such native or predisposing regard. For, though it be true, that there are certain moral virtues, which, when realized upon man, draw towards them the love and the reverence even of our depraved nature, and which, when heightened into perfection upon God, should therefore, it might be conceived, obtain from nature, if placed in favourable circumstances, the homage of a

love still more tender, and of a reverence still more profound; —yet there is one great and comprehensive quality by which all the moral attributes of the Godhead are pervaded, and for which, we can detect no native and no kindred principle of attachment whatever, in the constitution of our species. We allude to the holiness of the Godhead. Were we asked to define this holiness, we should feel that we were not giving to the term its full significancy, by saying, that it merely consisted in the absolute perfection of all the moral virtues of the Divinity. It is a term which, in, the appropriate force of it, denotes contrast or separation. It was for this reason assigned to the vessels of the temple, and just because they were set apart from common use. To have made them common, would have been to make them unclean, or unholy. To have turned them to any ordinary or household purposes, would have been to inflict upon them such a touch of profanation, that their holiness would have departed from them. Had there been a full and perfect sense of God in every house, and in every heart,—had the presence of the Divinity been equally felt by his creatures at all times, and in all places,—had the will of the Divinity held as presiding an influence over the every-day doings, as over the services of the solemn and extraordinary occasion,—then there might have been no temple, and no ritual observation, and, of consequence, no room for such an application of the term holiness. A thing is not consecrated by being set apart from that which is equally pure and sacred with itself; and did there obtain an equal and universal purity throughout the whole system of nature, there could be no need for separation. In these circumstances, there would have been no contrast, and, therefore, no demand for such a term, as that of holiness.

This may serve to illustrate the force and import of the term, as applied to the character of God. It does not signify the moral perfection of his character, taken absolutely. It signifies this perfection in relation to its opposite. When we look to the holiness of the divine character, we look to it in its aspect of lofty separation from all that can either taint or debase it. We look to its irreconcilable variance with sin. We look to the inaccessible height at which it stands above all the pos-

sible acquirements of created nature, insomuch, that he who possesses it, charges even his angels with folly: and when created nature is not only imperfect, but sinful, when we look to the recoil of the Divinity from all contact, and from all approximation. We think of the purer eyes than can behold iniquity, and of the presence so sacred, that evil cannot dwell with it. We think of that sanctuary into which there cannot enter any thing that defileth, or that maketh a lie,—a sanctuary guarded by all the jealousies of the Divine nature, and so repugnant to the approach of pollution, that if it offer to draw nigh, the fire of a consuming indignation will either check, or will destroy it.

Now, were the whole severity of this attribute directed against the violations of social kindness, and social equity, we would admit that there was a ready coalescence with it in the principles of our natural constitution. But when it searches into the character of the most urgent affections of nature, and there detects the very essence of sinfulness;—when it sits in judgment over the preference given by every child of Adam to the creature, rather than the Creator, and who holds this in righteous abomination;—when it looks through a society of human beings, and pronounces, in spite of all the justice by which its interests are guarded, and of all the humanity by which its ills are softened, or done away, that, wholly given over to the enjoyment of the world, it is wholly immersed in the guilt of an idolatry, by which the jealousies of the supreme and spiritual God are provoked to the uttermost;—when holiness is thus seen, not merely in its antipathy to crime, which is occasional and rare, but in its antipathy to an affection, the rooted obstinacy of which, and the engrossing power of which, are universal,—then so far from the coalescence of approving nature, do we behold the revolt of pained and irritated nature. It no more follows, because man loathes the cruelty or the injustice of his fellow-man, that he therefore carries in his heart a predisposing element of regard for the essential character of God, than it follows, because a man would sicken with disgust at the atrocities of a prison-house, that he therefore feels his element and his joy to be in the humble piety of a conventicle. A high-minded and an honourable merchant finds room in his bosom

for the love both of truth and of the world. Yet the one is an attribute of God, while the love of the other is opposite to the love of God. "If any man love the world," says an apostle, "the love of the Father is not in him." He may like the transcript of truth, and of many other virtues on the face of the creature, but he likes not the Creator. He can gaze, and that even with rapture on the partial and imperfect sketches of the unfinished copy, but he shrinks from the view of the entire original. He can hold the intercourse of wistful thoughts, and fervent aspiration, with the absent object of his earthly regard, but he has neither, taste nor capacity for communion with his Father in heaven. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," is the anthem of the celestial, but theirs is a delight which he cannot share in. And as surely as his body would need to be transformed, ere it could cease to have pain amid the agonies of hell,—so surely would his mind need to be transformed, ere it ceased to feel a confinement and an irksomeness amid the halleluiahs of paradise.

Even though man, then, had in his heart a nascent affection for the character of God, this would be restrained from passing onwards to an affection for his person, by a sense of guilt, and the consequent dread of God as an enemy. Nor could the love of God be inserted in his bosom, till by faith in the expiation of the gospel, that which letteth was taken out of the way. But still more, if, in conformity to our present argument, there be no such nascent affection for the Divine character, is it hopeless to attempt the establishment of love antecedently to belief, or that attachment should take possession of the heart, ere fear takes its departure away from it. Even if by the working of some power unknown in the human constitution, or by some effort, the success of which has never yet, in a single instance, been experienced, there could be made to arise in the soul, the love of holiness, previous to the act of trusting in the offered Saviour,—a terror at God, which, in the absence of this trust, is the instinctive and universal feeling of nature, would just as effectually repress the love of holiness, as it does the love of truth, or of compassion, or of justice, from carrying us onwards to a regard for the person of the Godhead. To put the love

of God's character into a heart not yet brought into enlargement by the faith of the gospel, would just be to put it into a prison-hold, and there to chain it down to a fruitlessness and inactivity, where it would be wholly unproductive of love to God himself. Confidence must take the precedency of this love, even in a bosom already furnished with the preparatory elements of affection; and how much more essential then is it, that it should take the precedency in a bosom, where these elements are altogether wanting? Faith is thus more strongly evinced to be a thing of prior and indispensable necessity. Without it, even the seed of any precious affection for the Godhead, stifled in embryo, would not blow into luxuriance. And if our nature be such a wilderness that no seed is there,—if the thing wanted be the germination of a new principle, and not the developement of an old,—if it be by a creative and not by a mere fostering process, that we are transformed into a meetness for heaven,—if the agency that is made to bear upon the human soul, must have a power to regenerate as well as to repair,—and if the promise of this agency be given only to those who believe, then let us no more linger, or be bewildered, in that abyss of helplessness from which faith alone can extricate the inquirer,—let us no longer arrest the eye of confidence from that demonstration of good will, which is held out to the most widely alienated of sinners,—but hasten to place ourselves, even now, on that foundation of trust, where alone we are made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

"Destroy this temple," says the Saviour, "and I will raise it up again in three days." It is there alone that we can behold the beauty of the Lord and be safe. This place of greatest security, is also the place of chiefest glory. It is when admitted into this greater and more perfect tabernacle, that we can look on majesty without terror, and on holiness without an overwhelming sense of condemnation. The sinner encircled in mercy looks in tranquil contemplation on all that is awful and venerable in the character of the Godhead,—and never do truth, and righteousness, and purity, appear in loftier exhibition before him, than, when withheld from his own person, he sees

the whole burden of their avenging laid upon the head of the great Sacrifice.

" One thing have I desired of the Lord," says the Psalmist, " that I may dwell in the courts of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." It is not till we are within the portals of the place of refuge that this desire can obtain its fulfilment. Selfishness may have originated the movement which took us there. The fear of the coming wrath may have lent celerity to our footsteps. A joyful sense of deliverance may have been felt, ere the glories of the divine character were seen in bright and convincing manifestation. The love of gratitude may have kindled within us,—and, with the Psamilst, we may have to seek, and to enquire, and to have daily exercise and meditation, ere the love of moral esteem has attained the place of ascendency which belongs to it. Nevertheless, the chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever. This is the real destination of every individual who is redeemed from among men. This should be the main object of all his prayers, and all his preparations. It is this which fits him for the company of heaven; and unless there be a growing taste for God, in the glories of his excellency,—for God, in the beauties of his holiness,—there is no ripening, and no perfecting, for the mansions of immortality. Though you have to combat, then, with the sluggishness of sense, and with the real aversion of nature to every spiritual exercise, you must attempt, and stenuously cultivate, the habit of communion with God. And as no man knoweth the Father save the Son reveal him, and as it is by the Spirit that Christ gives light to those who believe in him;—for the attainment of this great moral and spiritual accomplishment, do what the Apostle directs you, when he says, " Keep yourselves in the love of God, by praying in the Holy Ghost." Your first endeavours may be feeble, and fatiguing, and fruitless. But God will not despise the day of small things,—nor will the light of his countenance be always withheld from those who aspire after it,—nor will the soul that thirsts after God, be left for ever un-

satisfied,—and the life and peace of being spiritually minded, will come in rich experience to his feelings,—and the whole habit of his tastes and enjoyments, will be in diametric opposition to that of the children of the world,—God being the habitation to which he resorts continually,—God being the strength of his heart, and his portion for evermore.

SERMON XII.

THE EMPTINESS OF NATURAL VIRTUE.

JOHN v. 24.

"But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."

WHEN it is said, in a former verse of the gospel, that Jesus knew what was in man, we feel, that it is a tribute of acknowledgment, rendered to his superior insight, into the secrecies of our constitution. It was not the mere faculty of perceiving what lay before him, that was ascribed to him by the Evangelist. It was the faculty of perceiving what lay disguised under a semblance, that would have imposed on the understanding of other men. It was the faculty of detecting. It was a discerning of the spirit, and that not through the transparency of such unequivocal symptoms, as brought its character clearly home to the view of the observer. But it was a discerning of the spirit, as it lay wrapt in what, to an ordinary spectator, was a thick and impenetrable hiding place. It was a dicovery there of the real posture and habitude of the soul. It was a searching of it out, through all the recesses of duplicity, winding and counterwinding in such a way, as to elude altogether the eye of common acquaintanceship. It was the assigning to it of one attribute, at the time when it wore the guise of another attribute,—of utter antipathy to the nature and design of his mission, at the very time that multitudes were drawn around him, by the fame of his miracles,—of utter indifference about God, at the very time that they zealously asserted the sanctity of his sabbaths, and resented as blasphemous, whatever they felt to be an usurpation of the greatness which belonged to him only.

It was in the exercise of this faculty, that Jesus came forward

with the utterance of our text. The Jews, by whom he was surrounded, had charged him with the guilt of profanation, and sought even to avenge it by his death, because he had healed a man on the sabbath day. And their desire of vengeance was still more inflamed, by what they understood to be an assertion, on his part, of equality with God. And yet, under all this appearance, and even with all this reality of a zeal about God, did he who knew what was in man pronounce of these his enemies, that the love of God was not in them. I know you says he,—as if at this instant he had put forth a stretch of penetration, in order to find his way through all the sounds of godliness which he heard, and through all the symptoms of godliness which he saw,—I know that there does not exist within you that principle, which links to God, the whole of God's obedient creation, —I know that you do not love him, and that, therefore, you are utterly in want of that affection, which lies at the root of all real, and of all acceptable godliness.

It is mortifying to the man who possesses many accomplishments of character, to be told, that the greatest and most essential accomplishment of a moral being, is that of which he has no share,—that the principle on which we expatiated in our last discourses does not, in any of its varieties, belong to him,—that, wanting it, he wants not merely obedience to the first and the greatest commandment, which is the love of God, but he wants what may be called the impregnating quality of all acceptable obedience whatever,—the spirit which ought to animate the performance of every other commandment, and without which the most laborious conformity to the law of Heaven, may do no more than impress upon his person the cold and lifeless image of loyalty, while in his mind there is not one of its essential attributes.

We know not a more useful exercise than that of carrying round this conviction amongst all the classes and conditions of humanity. In the days of our Saviour, the pride of the Pharisees stood opposed to such a demonstration; and in our own days too, there are certain pretensions of worth, and of excellence, which must be disposted, ere we can hope to obtain admittance for the humiliating doctrine of the gospel. For this

gospel, it must be observed, proceeds upon the basis, not of a partial, but of an entire and universal depravity among the men of the world. It assimilates all the varieties of the human character into one common condition of guilt, and need, and helplessness. It presumes the existence of such a moral disease in every son and daughter of Adam, as renders the application of the same moral remedy indispensable to them all. The formalists of Judea did not like to be thus grouped with publicans and harlots, under one description of sinfulness. Nor do men of taste, and feeling, and graceful morality, in our present day, readily understand how they should require the same kind of treatment, in the work of preparing them for immortality, with the most glaringly profligate and unrighteous of their neighbourhood. They look to the ostensible marks of distinction between themselves and others;—and what wider distinction, they think, can possibly be assigned, than that which obtains between the upright, or the kind-hearted on the one hand, and the ungenerous or dishonest, on the other? Now, what we propose, in the following discourse, is to lead them to look a little farther,—and then they will see at least one point of similarity between these two classes, the want of one common ingredient with both, and which attaches to each of them a great moral defect, that can only be repaired by one and the same application,

It is well when we can find out an accordancy between the actual exhibition of human nature on the field of experience, and the representation that is given of this nature on the field of revelation. Now, the Bible every where groups the individuals of our species, into two general and distinct classes, and assigns to each of them its appropriate designation. It tells us of the vessels of wrath, and of the vessels of mercy; of the travellers on a narrow path, and on a broad way; of the children of this world, and the children of light; and, lastly, of men who are carnally minded, and men who are spiritually minded. It employs these terms in a meaning so extensive, that by each couplet of them it embraces all individuals. There is no separate number of persons, forming of themselves a neutral class, and standing without the limits of the two others.

And were it possible to conceive, that human nature, as it exists at present in the world, were laid in a map before us, you would see no intermediate ground between the two classes which are thus contrasted in the Bible,—but these thrown into two distinct regions, with one clear and vigorous line of demarcation between them.

We often read of this line, and we often read of the transition from the one to the other side of it. But there is no trace of any middle department to be met with in the New Testament. The alternative has only two terms, and ours must be the one or the other of them. And as surely as a day is coming, when all the men of our assembled world shall be found on the right or on the left hand of the throne of judgment—so surely do the carnal and the spiritual regions of human nature, stand apart from each other; and all the men who are now living on the surface of the world, are to be found on the right, or on the wrong side, of the line of demarcation.

We cannot conceive, then, a question of mightier interest, than the situation of this line,—a line which takes its own steady and unfaltering way through the thousand varieties of character that exist in the world; and which reduces them all to two great, and awfully important divisions. It marks off one part of the species from the other. We are quite aware that the terms which are employed to characterize the two sets are extremely unfashionable; and, what is more, are painfully offensive to many a mind, whose taste, and whose habits, have not yet been brought under the overpowering controul of God's own message expressed in God's own language. They are such terms as would be rejected with a positive sensation of disgust by many a moralist, and would be thought by many more, to impart the blemish of a most hideous deformity, to his eloquent and philosophical pages. It is curious here to observe how much the Maker of the human mind, and the mere observer of the human mind, differ in their views and representations of the same object. But when told, on the highest of all authority, that to be carnally minded is death, and to be spiritually minded is life and peace, we are compelled to acknowledge with a feeling of earnestness, greater than mere curiosity can inspire,

that the application of these terms, is a question of all others the most deeply affecting to the fears, and the wishes of humanity.

In the prosecution of this question, let me attempt to bring a succession of characters before you, most of which must have met your own distinct and familiar observation; and of which, while exceedingly various in their complexion, we hope to succeed in convincing you, that the love of God, at least, is not in them.—If this can be made out against them, it may be considered as experimentally fixing to which of the two great divisions of humanity they belong. All who love God, may have boldness when they think of the day of judgment, because, like unto God, who himself is love, they will be pronounced meet for the enjoyment, and the fellowship of him through eternity. And they who want this affection when they die shall be turned into hell. They shall be found to possess that carnal mind which is enmity against God. So that upon the single point of whether they possess this love or not, hinges the question which I have just now started,—a question surely which it were better for every man to decide at the bar of conscience now, ere it comes under the review of that dread tribunal which is to award to him his everlasting habitation.

I. Let us first offer to your notice, a man living in the grossness of animal indulgence,—a man, the field of whose enjoyments is altogether sensual,—and who, therefore, in addition to the charge he brings down upon himself, of directly violating the law of God, is regarded by the admirers of what is tasteful and refined in the human character, as a loathsome object of contemplation. There is something more here than mere wickedness of character to excite the regret or detestation of the godly. There is sordidness of character to excite the disgust of the elegant. And let us just add one feature more to this portrait of deformity. Let us suppose the man in question to have so abandoned himself to the impulses of selfishness, that no feeling and no principle whatever, restrains him from yielding to its temptations,—that to obtain the gratification he is in quest of, he can violate all the decencies, and bid away from him all the tendernesses of our common humanity,—that he has the

hardihood to set the terrors of the civil law at defiance,—and that, for the money which ministers to every earthly appetite, he can even go so far, as to steel his heart against the atrocity of a murder. When we have thus set before you, the picture of one feasting on the prey of his inhuman robberies, we have surely brought our description as far down in the scale of character, as it can well be carried. And we have done so, on purpose that you may be at no loss to assign the place which belongs to him. It were a monstrous supposition altogether, that either the love of gratitude, or the love of moral esteem for the Deity, were to be found in the bosom of such a man. He then, of all others, is not spiritual but carnal; nor do we anticipate a single dissenting voice when we say, that whatever be the doubts and the delusions which may prevail about men of another aspect, the man whose habits and pursuits have now been sketched to you, stands on the wrong side of the line of demarcation.

We are far from saying, that a man of such a character as this is of frequent occurrence in society. We merely set him up as a kind of starting-post, for the future train of our argument. It is a mighty advantage, in every discussion, to have a clear and undisputed outset,—and we trust, that, if thus far we have kept cordially by the side of each other, we shall not cast out by the way, in the progress of our remaining observations.

II. Let us now proceed, then, to detach one offensive feature from the character of him, whom we have thus set before you, as a compound of many abominations. Let us leave entire all his dishonesty, and all his devotedness to the pleasures of sense, but soften and transform his heart to such a degree, that he would recoil from the perpetration of a murder. This is a different portrait from the one which we formerly exhibited. There is in it an instinctive horror at an act of violence, which did not belong to the other;—and the question we have now to put, is, Has the man who owns this improved representation, become, on this single difference, a spiritual man? We answer this question by another. Is the difference that we have now assigned to him, due to the love of God, or to such a principle of loyal subjection to his authority, as this love is sure to engen-

der? You will not call him spiritual from the mere existence of a feeling which would rise spontaneously in his heart, even though the Father of spirits were never thought of. We appeal to your own consciousness of what passes within you, if the heart do not experience the movement of many a constitutional feeling, altogether unaccompanied by any reference of the mind, to the love, or to the character, or even to the existence of God. Are you not quite sensible, that though the idea of a God lay in a state of dormancy for hours, and for days together, many of the relentings of nature would, in the mean while, remain with you? For the preservation and the order of society, God has been kind enough to implant in the bosom of man, many a natural predilection, and many a natural horror,—of which he *feels* the operation, and the people of his neighbourhood enjoy the advantage, at the very time that one and all of them, unmindful of God, are walking in the counsel of their own hearts, and after the sight of their own eyes. He has done the same thing to the inferior animals. He has endowed them with a principle of attachment to their offspring, in virtue of which, they, generally speaking, would recoil from the murder of their young with as determined an abhorrence, as you would do from the murder of a fellow-creature. You would not surely say of the irrational instinct, that because amiable, or useful, or pleasing to contemplate, there is any thing spiritual in the impulse it communicates. Then do not offer a violence both to Scripture and philosophy, by confounding, in the mind of man, principles which are distinct from each other. Do not say, that he is spiritual, merely because he is moving in obedience to his constitutional tendencies. Do not say, that he is not carnal, while all that he has done, or abstained from doing, may be done or abstained from, though he lived without God in the world. And go not to infer, while the pleasures of sense are the idols of his every affection—that because he would shudder to purchase them, at the expense of another's blood, he, on that single account, may be looked on as a spiritual man, and as standing on the right side of the line of demarcation.

III. All this may be looked upon, as too indisputable for argument. And yet it is the very principle which, if carried to

its fair extent, and brought faithfully home to the conscience, would serve to convince of ungodliness, the vast majority of this world's generations. If a natural recoil from murder, may be experienced by the bosom, in which there exists no love to God,—why may not this natural recoil be carried still farther, and yet the love of God be just as absent from the bosom as before? There are other dishonesties, of a far less outrageous character, than that by which you would commit an act of depredation; and other cruelties far less enormous, than that by which you would imbrue your hand in another's blood,—which still the generality of men would revolt from constitutionally, and that too, without the movement of any affection for their God, or even so much as any thought of him. We have only to conceive the softening of a further transformation, to take place on the man, with whom we set out at the beginning of our argument; and he may thus become, like the man we read of in the parable, who took comfort to himself in the security, that he had goods laid up for many years, and at the same time is not charged, either with violence, or dishonesty in the acquirement of them. He is charged, with nothing but a devoted attachment to wealth; and to the pleasures which that wealth can purchase. And yet, what an awful reckoning did he come under! He seems to have just been such a man, as we can be at no loss to meet with every day in the range of our familiar acquaintances,—enjoying themselves in easy and comfortable abundance; but at an obvious and unquestionable distance from any thing that can be called atrocity of character. There is not one of them, perhaps, who would not recoil from an act of barbarity; and who would not be moved with honest indignation, at the tale of perfidy, or of violence. They live in a placid course of luxury, and good humour; and we are far from charging them with any thing which the world calls monstrous,—when we say, that the Father of spirits is unminded, and unregarded by them, and that the good things of the world are their gods. If it be a vain superfluity of argument to prove, that a man may not be spiritual, and yet be endowed with such a degree of natural tenderness, as to recoil from the perpetration of a murder,—then it is equally indisputable, that a man may

not be spiritual, though endowed with such a degree of natural tenderness, as to recoil from many lesser acts of cruelty, or injustice. In other word's, he may be a very fair every-day character; and if it be so sure a principle, that a man may not be a murderer, and yet be carnal, then let one and all of you look well to your own security; for it is the very principle which might be employed, to shake the thousands and tens of thousands of ordinary men, out of the security in which they have entrenched themselves.

IV. But to proceed in this work of transformation. Let us now conceive a still more exquisite softening of affection and tenderness, to be thrown over the whole of our imaginary character. We thus make another step, and another departure, from the original specimen. By the first step, the mind is made to feel a kind of revolting, at the atrocity of a murder; and the character ceases to be monstrous. By the second, the mind is made to share in all the common antipathies of our nature, to what is cruel and unfeeling; and it is thus wrought up to the average of character which obtains in society. By the third step, the mind is endowed with the warmer and more delicate sympathies of our nature, and thus rises to a more exalted place in the scale of character. It becomes positively amiable. You look to him, who owns all these graceful sensibilities, even as the Saviour looked unto the young man of the gospels, and, like the Saviour, you love him. Who can in fact, refrain from doing homage to such a lovely exhibition of all that is soothing in humanity; and whether he be employed in mingling his tears, and his charities, with the unfortunate, or in shedding a gentle lustre over the retirement of his own family, even orthodoxy herself, stern and unrelenting as she is conceived to be, cannot find it in her heart to frown upon him. But, feeling is one thing, and truth is another; and when the question is put, Do all these sensibilities, heightened and adorned as they are, on the upper walks of society, constitute a spiritual man?—it is not by a sigh, or an aspiration of tenderness, that we are to answer it. We are put on a cool exercise of the understanding; and we cannot close it against the fact, that all these feelings may exist apart from the love of God, and apart from the

religious principle,—that the idea of a God may be expunged from the heart of man, and yet that heart be still the seat of the same constitutional impulses as ever,—that in reference to the realities of the unseen and spiritual world, the mind may be an entire blank, and there, at the same time, be room in it, for the play of kindly and benevolent emotions. We commit these truths to your own experience, and if carried faithfully to the conscience, they may chase away another of the delusions which encompass it. There is no fear of me, for I have a feeling heart, is a plea which they put a decisive end to. This feeling heart, if unaccompanied by any sense of God, is no better evidence of a spiritual man, than is the circulation of the blood. We are far from refusing it the homage of our tenderness. We feel a love to it, but we will not make a lie about it. We can make no more of it, than Scripture and experience enable us to do. And, if it be true, that a man's heart may be the habitual seat of kind affections, while an affection for God is habitually away from it, if it be true that no man can be destitute of this affection, and at the same time be a spiritual man,—if it be true, that he who is not spiritual, is carnal, and that the carnally-minded cannot inherit the kingdom of God;—then the necessity lies upon us: he is still in the region and shadow of death; and if he refuse the arguments and invitations of the gospel, calling him over to another region than that which he now occupies, he must just be numbered among those more beauteous wrecks of our fallen nature, which are destined to perish and be forgotten.

V. But let us go still farther. Let us suppose the heart to be furnished, not merely with the finest sensibilities, of our nature, but with its most upright and honourable principles. Let us conceive a man whose pulse beats high with the pride of integrity; whose every word carries security along with it; whose faithfulness in the walks of business has stood the test of many fluctuations; who, amid all the varieties of his fortune, has nobly sustained the glories of an untainted character; and whom we see by the salutations of the market-place, to be acknowledged and revered by all, as the most respectable of the citizens. Now, which of the two great regions of human charac-

ter shall we make him to occupy? This question depends upon another. May all this manly elevation of soul, and of sentiment, stand disunited in the same heart, with the influence of the authority of God, or with that love of God which is the keeping of his commandments? The discerning eye of Hume saw that it could; and he tells us that natural honesty of temper is a better security for the faithfulness of a man's doings, than all the authority of religious principle over him. We deny the assertion; but the distinction between the two principles on which it proceeds, is indisputable. There is a principle of honour, apart in the human mind altogether, from any reference to the realities of a spiritual world. It varies in the intensity of its operation, with different individuals. It has the chance of being more entire, when kept aloof from the temptations of poverty: and therefore it is, that we more frequently meet with it in the upper and middling classes of life. And we can conceive it so strong in its original influence, or so grateful to the possessor from the elevating consciousness which goes along with it, or so nourished by the voice of an applauding world, as to throw all the glories of a romantic chivalry over the character of him, with whom God is as much unthought of, as he is unseen. We are far from refusing our admiration. But we are saying, that the Being who brought this noble specimen of our nature into existence; who fitted his heart for all its high and generous emotions; who threw a theatre around him, for the display and exercise of his fine moral accomplishments; who furnished each of his admirers with a heart to appreciate his worth, and a voice to pour into his ear the flattering expression of it;—the Being whose hand upholds and perpetuates the whole of this illustrious exhibition, may all the while be forgotten, and unnoticed as a thing of no consequence. We are merely saying, that the man whose heart is occupied with a sentiment of honour, and is at the same time unoccupied with a sense of Him, who is the first and greatest of spiritual beings, is not a spiritual man. But, if not spiritual, we are told in the Bible, that there are only two terms in the alternative, and he must be carnal.—And the God whom he has disregarded in time, will find, that in the praises and enjoyments of time, he

has gotten all his reward, and that he owes him no recompense in eternity.

We appeal to the state of the public mind some years ago, on the subject of Africa, as a living exemplification of the whole argument. "Love thy neighbour as thyself," says the Bible; and this precept, coming with all the force of its religious influence upon the hearts of men, who carry their respects to the will of a spiritual and unseen God, have urged them on, and with noble effect, to the abolition of the deadliest mischief that was ever let loose upon the species. And whether we look to the Quakers, who originated the cause, or to him who pioneered the cause, or to him who plead the cause, or to him who has impregnated with such a moral charm, the atmosphere of his country, that no human creature can breathe of its air without taking in the generous inspiration of liberty along with it,—we cannot fail to observe, that one and all of them speak the language, and evince the tastes, and are not ashamed to own their most entire and decided preference for the objects of spiritual men. There is an evident sense of religious duty, which gives the tone of Christianity, and throws the aspect of sacredness over the whole of their doings; and the unbaffled perseverance of the many years they had to struggle with difficulties, and to spend in the weariness of ever recurring disappointments, bears striking proof to the unquenchable energy of the Christian principle within them. But who can deny the large and important contributions which came in upon the cause from other quarters? We hold it quite consistent with the truth of human nature, to aver, that in this enlightened country, other principles may have lent their aid to the cause, and, apart from christianity altogether, may have sent a commanding influence into the hearts of some of its ablest and most efficient supporters. There is nothing in the presence of Christian principle to quell the impassioned fervour of our desires after right objects; but the absence of Christian principle does not necessarily extinguish this fervour. When we look back to the animating ferment of the British public, on the subject of Africa, we will ever contend, that a feeling of obligation to a spiritual being, was the ingredient which set it agoing, and which kept it agoing. But who can

deny the existence and the powerful operation of other ingredients? An instinctive horror at cruelty, is a separate and independent attribute of the heart, and sufficient of itself to inspire the deepest tones of that eloquence which sounded in parliament, and issued from the press, and spread an infection over all the provinces of the empire, and mustered around the cause, thousands and tens of thousands of our rallying population, and gave such an energy to the public voice, that all the resisting jealousies, and interests of the country were completely overborne;—and hence the interesting spectacle, of carnal and spiritual men lending their respective energies to the accomplishment of one object, and securing, by their success, a higher name for Britian in the world, than all the wisdom of her counsels, and all the pride of her victories, can ever achieve for her.

Were it our only aim to carry the acquiescence of the understanding, there might be a danger in affirming, and urging, and illustrating to excess, the position, that we want to establish among you;—and it were perhaps better, to limit ourselves to one simple delivery of the argument. But our aim is, if possible, to affect the conscience, and to accomplish this object, not with one, but with many individuals. And when it is reflected, that one developement of the principle may come home more forcibly to some man's experience than another, we must beg to be excused for one recurrence more to a topic, so pregnant of consequence to your everlasting interests. There is a sadly meagre and frivolous conception of human sinfulness, that is prevalent amongst you,—and it goes to foster this delusion, that when we look abroad on the face of society, we must be struck with the diversity of character, which obtains among the individuals who compose it. Some there are who in the estimation of the world, are execrable for their crimes, but others who in the same estimation, are illustrious for their virtues. In that general mass of corruption, to which we would reduce our unfortunate species, is there, it may be asked, no solitary example of what is pure and honourable, and lovely? Do we never meet with the charity which melts at suffering; with the honesty which disdains, and is proudly superior to falsehood;

with the active beneficence which gives to others its time and its labour; with the modesty which shrinks from notice, and gives all its sweetness to retirement; with the gentleness which breathes peace to all, and throws a beautiful lustre over the walks of domestic society? If we find these virtues to be sometimes exhibited, is not this an argument against the doctrine of such an entire, and unmitigated depravity, as we have been contending for? Will it not serve to redeem humanity from that sweeping indiscriminate charge of corruption, which is so often advanced against it, in all the pride and intolerance of orthodoxy? What better evidence can be given of our love to God, than our adherence to his law? And are not the virtues which we have just now specified part of that law? Are not they the very virtues which his authority requires of us, and which imparts such a charm to the morality of the New Testament.

Now, it carries us at once to the bottom of this delusion, to observe, that though the religious principle can never exist, without the amiable and virtuous conduct of the New Testament; yet, that conduct may, in some measure, be maintained, without the religious principle. A man may be led to precisely the same conduct, on the impulse of many different principles. He may be gentle, because it is a prescription of the divine law:—or, he may be gentle, because he is naturally of a peaceful, or indolent constitution;—or, he may be gentle, because he sees it to be an amiable gracefulness, with which he wishes to adorn his own character;—or, he may be gentle, because it is the ready way of perpetuating the friendship of those around him; or, he may be gentle, because taught to observe it, as a part of courtly and fashionable deportment,—and what was implanted by education, may come in time to be confirmed, by habit and experience. Now, it is only under the first of these principles, that there is any religion in gentleness. The other principles may produce all the outward appearance of this virtue, and much even of its inward complacency, and yet be as distinct from the religious principle, as they are distinct from one another. To infer the strength of the religious principle, from the taste of the human mind, for what is graceful and lovely in character, would just be as preposterous, as to infer it from

the admiration of a fine picture, or a cultivated landscape. They are not to be confounded. They occupy a different place, even in the classifications of philosophy. We do not deny, that the admiration of what is fine in character, is a principle of a higher order, than the admiration of what is fine in external scenery. So is a taste for what is beautiful in the prospect before us, a principle of a higher order, than a taste for the sensualities of the epicure. But they, one and all of them, stand at a wide distance from the religious principle: and whether it be taste, or temper, or the love of popularity, or the high impulse of honourable feeling, or even the love of truth, and a natural principle of integrity,—the virtues in question may be so unconnected with religion, as to flourish in the world, and be rewarded by its admiration, even though God were expunged from the belief, and immortality from the prospects, of the species.

The virtues, then, to which the enemies of our doctrine make such a confident appeal, may have no force whatever in the argument,—because, properly speaking, they may not be exemplifications of the religious principle. If you do what is virtuous, because God tells you so, then, and then only, do you give us a fair example of the authority of religion over your practice. But, if you do it merely because it is lovely, because it is honourable, or because it is a fine moral accomplishment,—we will not refuse the testimony of our admiration, but we cannot submit to such an error, either of conception, or of language, as to allow that there is any religion in all this. These qualities have our utmost friendship; and we give the most substantial evidence of this, when, instead of leaving them to their own solitary claims upon the human heart, we call in the aid of religion, and support them by its authority: "Whatsoever things are pure, or lovely, or honest, or of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things." But we will not admit, that the mere circumstance of their being lovely, supercedes the authority of religion; nor can we endure such an injustice to the Author of all that is graceful, both in nature and morality, as that the native charms of virtue should usurp, in our admiration, the Place of God—of him who

gave to virtue all its charms, and formed the heart of man to love and to admire them.

Be not deceived, then, into a rejection of that doctrine which forms the great basis of a sinner's religion, by the specimens of moral excellence which are to be met with in society; or by the praise which your own virtues extort from an applauding neighbourhood. Virtue may exist, and in such a degree too, as to constitute it a lovely object in the eyes of the world, but if there be in it no reference of the mind to the will of God, there is no religion in it. Such virtue as this has its reward in its natural consequences, in the admiration of others, or in the delights of conscious satisfaction. But we cannot see why God will reward it in the capacity of your master, when his service was not the principle of it, and you were therefore not acting at all the part of a servant to him,—nor do we see how he can reward it in the capacity of your judge, when, in the whole process of virtuous feeling, and virtuous sentiment, and virtuous conduct, you carried in your heart no reference whatever, for a single moment, to him as to your lawgiver. We do not deny that there are many such examples of virtue in the world; but then we insist upon it, that they cannot be put down to the account of religion. They often may, and actually do, exist in a state of entire separation from the religious principle; and in that case, they go no farther than to prove that your taste is unvitiated, that your temper is amiable, that your social dispositions promote the peace and welfare of society; and they will be rewarded with its approbation. Now, it is well that you act your part as a member of society; and religion, by making this, one of its injunctions, gives us the very best security, that wherever its influence prevails, it will be done in the most perfect manner. But the point we labour to impress is, that a man may be what we all understand by a good member of society, without the authority of God as his legislator, being either recognized or acted upon. We do not say that his error lies in being a good member of society. This, though only a circumstance at present, is a very fortunate one. The error lies in his having discarded the authority of God, or rather, in his never having admitted the influence of that authority over his

heart, or his practice. We want to guard him against the delusion, that the principle which he has, can ever be accepted as a substitute for the principle he has not,—or, that the very highest sense of duty, which his situation as a member of society, impresses upon his feelings, will ever be received as an atonement for wanting that sense of duty to God, which he ought to feel in the far more exalted capacity of his servant, and candidate for his approbation. We stand on the high ground, that he is the subject of the Almighty,—nor shall we shrink from declaring the whole extent of the principle. Let his path in society be ever so illustrious, by the virtues which adorn it; let every word, and every performance, be as honourable as a proud sense of integrity can make it; let the salutations of the market-place mark him out as the most respectable of the citizens; and the gratitude of a thousand families ring the praises of his beneficence to the world: If the actor in this splendid exhibition, carry in his mind no reference to the authority of God, we do not hesitate to pronounce him unworthy,—nor shall all the execrations of generous, but mistaken principle, deter us from putting forth our hand to strip him of his honours. What! is the world to gaze in admiration on this fine spectacle of virtue; and are we to be told that the Being, who gave such faculties to one of his children, and provides the theatre for their exercise,—that the Being, who called this moral scene into existence, and gave it all its beauties,—that he is to be forgotten, and neglected as of no consequence? Shall we give a deceitful lustre to the virtues of him who is unmindful of his God,—and with all the grandeur of eternity before us, can we turn to admire those short-lived exertions, which only shed a fleeting brilliancy over a paltry and perishable scene? It is true that he who is counted faithful in little will also be counted faithful in much; and when God is the principle of this fidelity, the very humblest wishes of benevolence will be rewarded. But its most splendid exertions without this principle, have no inheritance in heaven. Human praise, and human eloquence, may acknowledge it; but the Discerner of the heart never will. The heart may be the seat of every amiable feeling, and every claim which comes to it in the shape of human misery may find

a welcome; but if the love of God be not there, it is not right with God,—and he who owns it, will die in his sins: he is in a state of impenitency.

Having thus disposed of those virtues which exist in a state of independence on the religious principle, we must be forced to recur to the doctrine of human depravity, in all its original aggravation. Man is corrupt, and the estrangement of his heart from God, is the decisive evidence of it. Every day of his life the first commandment of the law is trampled on,—and it is that commandment on which the authority of the whole is suspended. His best exertions are unsound in their very principle; and as the love of God reigns not within him, all that has usurped the name of virtue, and deceived us by its semblance, must be a mockery and a delusion.

We shall conclude with three observations, First, there is nothing more justly fitted to revolt the best feelings of the human heart against orthodoxy, than when any thing is said in its defence, which tends to mar the credit or the lustre of a moral accomplishment so lovely as benevolence. Let it be observed, then, that substantial benevolence is rarely, if ever, to be found apart from piety,—and that piety is but the hypocrisy of a name, when benevolence, in all the unweariedness of its well doing, does not go along with it. Benevolence may make some brilliant exhibitions of herself without the instigation of the religious principle. But in these cases you seldom have the touchstone of a painful sacrifice,—and you never have a spiritual aim, after the good of our imperishable nature. It is easy to indulge a constitutional feeling. It is easy to make a pecuniary surrender. It is easy to move gently along, amid the visits and the attentions of kindness, when every eye smiles welcome, and the soft whispers of gratitude minister their pleasing reward, and flatter you into the delusion that you are an angel of mercy. But give us the benevolence of him, who can ply his faithful task in the face of every discouragement,—who can labour in scenes where there is no brilliancy whatever to reward him, —whose kindness is that sturdy and abiding principle which can weather all the murmurs of ingratitude, and all the provocations of dishonesty,—who can find his way through poverty's

putrid lanes, and depravity's most nauseous and disgusting receptacles,—who can maintain the uniform and placid temper, within the secrecy of his own home, and amid the irksome annoyances of his own family,—who can endure hardships, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus,—whose humanity acts with as much vigour amid the reproach, and the calumny, and the contradiction of sinners, as when soothed and softened by the poetic accompaniment of weeping orphans, and interesting cottages,—and, above all, who labours to convert sinners, to subdue their resistance of the gospel, and to spiritualize them into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints. We maintain, that no such benevolence, realizing all these features, exists, without a deeply seated principle of piety lying at the bottom of it. Walk from Dan to Beersheba, and, away from christianity, and beyond the circle of its influences, there is positively no such benevolence to be found. The patience, the meekness, the difficulties of such a benevolence, cannot be sustained without the influence of a heavenly principle,—and when all that decks the theatre of this world is withdrawn, what else is there but the magnificence of eternity, to pour a glory over its path, and to minister encouragement in the midst of labours unnoticed by human eye, and unrewarded by human testimony? Even the most splendid enterprizes of benevolence, which the world ever witnessed, can be traced to the operation of what the world laughs at, as a quakerish and methodistical piety. And we appeal to the abolition of the slave trade, and the still nobler abolition of vice and ignorance, which is now accomplishing amongst the uncivilized countries of the earth, for the proof, that in good will to men, as well as glory to God, they are the men of piety who bear away the palm of superiority and of triumph.

But, Secondly, If all Scripture and all observation, are on the side of our text, should not this be turned by each of us into a personal concern? Should it not be taken up, and pursued, as a topic in which we all have a deep individual interest? Should it not have a more permanent hold of us, than a mere amusing general speculation? Are not prudence, and anticipation, and a sense of danger, all linked with the conclusion we have at-

tempted to press upon you? In one word, if there be such a thing as a moral government on the part of God,—if there be such a thing as the authority of a high and divine legislature,—if there be such a thing as a throne in heaven, and a judge sitting on that throne,—should not the question, What shall I do to be saved? come with all its big and deeply felt significancy into the heart and conscience of every one of us? We know that there is a very loose and general security upon this subject,—that the question, if it ever be suggested at all, is disposed of in an easy, indolent, and superficial way, by some such presumption, as that God is merciful, and that should be enough to pacify us. But why recur to any presumption, for the purpose of bringing the question to a settlement, when, upon this very topic, we are favoured with an authoritative message from God,—when an actual embassy has come from him, and that on the express errand of reconciliation?—when the records of this embassy have been collected into a volume, within the reach of all who will stretch forth their hand to it;—when the obvious expedient of consulting this record is before us? And surely, if what God says of himself, is of higher signification than what we think him to be, and if he tell us not merely that he is merciful, but that there is a particular way in which he chooses to be so;—nothing remains for us but submissively to learn that way, and obediently to go along with it. But he actually tells us, that there is no other name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved, but the name of Jesus. He tells us, that it is only in Christ, that he has reconciled the world unto himself. He tells us, that our alone redemption is in him whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,—that he might be just, while the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;—and surely, we must either give up the certainty of the record, or count these to be faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation.

Lastly, The question may occur, after having established the fact of human corruption, and recommended a simple acquiescence in the Saviour for forgiveness, What becomes of the corruption after this? Must we just be doing with it as an obstinate peculiarity of our nature, bearing down all our powers

of resistance, and making every struggle with it hopeless and unavailing? For the answer to this question, we commit you, as before, to the record. He who is in Christ Jesus is a new creature. Sin has no longer dominion over him. That very want which constituted the main violence of the disease, is made up to him. He wanted the love of God; and this love is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. He wanted the love of his neighbour; but God enters into a covenant with him, by which he puts this law in his heart, and writes it in his mind. The spirit is given to them who ask it in faith, and the habitual prayer of, Support me in the performance of this duty,—or, Carry me in safety through this trial of my heart and of my principles,—is heard with acceptance, and answered with power. The power of Christ is made to rest on those who look to him; and they will find to be their experience what Paul found to be his,—they will be able to do all things through Christ strengthening them. Now, the question we have to put is,—Tell us, if all this sound strange, and mysterious, and foreign, to the general style of your conceptions? Then be alarmed for your safety. The things you thus profess to be strange to you, are not the peculiar notions of one man, or the still more peculiar phraseology of another. They are the very notions and the very phraseology, of the Bible,—and you, by your antipathy or disregard to them, bring yourselves under precisely the same reckoning with God, that you do with a distant acquaintance, whom you insult by returning his letter unopened, or despise, by suffering it to lie beside you unread and unattended to. In this indelible word of God, you will meet with the free offer of forgiveness for the past, and a provision laid before you, by which all who make use of it, are carried forward to amendment, and progressive virtue for the future. They are open to all, and at the taking of all; but in proportion to the frankness, and freeness, and universality of the offer, will be the severity of that awful threatening to them who despise it. How shall they escape, if they neglect so great a salvation?

SERMON XIII.

THE NATURAL ENMITY OF THE MIND AGAINST GOD.

ROMANS viii. 7.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God."

We should be blinding ourselves against the light of experience, did we deny of many of our acquaintances, that they have either brought into the world, or have acquired, by a natural process of education, such a gentleness of temper, such a docility, such a taste for the amiable and the kind, such an honourable sense of integrity, such a feeling sympathy for the wants, and misfortunes of others, that it would not be easy, and what is more, we may venture to say, from the example of our Saviour, who, when he looked to the young man, loved him, that it would positively not be right, to withhold from them our admiration and our tenderness. Still it were a violation of all scriptural propriety in language, to say of them that they were not carnal, or not carnally minded. All, by the very signification of the term, are carnal, whose minds either retain their original constitution, or have undergone no other transforming process than a mere process of natural education. Some minds are in these circumstances, more agreeable to look upon than others, just as some faces are more agreeable than others, to the eye. Each mind has its own peculiar character, just as each face has its own set of features, and its own complexion. But, as all the varieties in the latter, from exquisite beauty to most revolting deformity, do not exclude from any, the one and universal attribute of decay,—so neither may all the constitutional varieties in the former, from the most sordid to the most natu-

rally upright and amiable, exclude the possession of some one and universal attribute; and it may be the very attribute assigned to nature in the text—even hostility against God.

Let us first offer some remarks on the affirmation of the text, that the carnal mind is enmity against God,—and then shortly consider, how it is that the gospel of Jesus Christ suits its applications to this great moral disease.

I. It appears a very presumptuous attempt, on the part of a human interpreter, when the object which he proposes, and which he erects into a separate head of discussion, is to prove the assertion of the text. Should not the very circumstance of its being the assertion of the text, be proof enough for you? On what better foundation can your belief be laid than on the testimony of God? and when we come to understand the meaning of the thing testified, is not the bare fact of God being the witness of it, sufficient ground for its credibility to rest upon? Shall man's reasoning carry a greater authority along with it, than God's declaration? Is your faith to depend on the success or the failure of his argument? Whether he succeed in establishing the truth of the assertion or not, upon independent reasonings of his own,—remember that by reading it out in his text, he has already come forward with an argument more conclusive than any which his ingenuity can devise. And yet, how often do your convictions lie suspended on the ability of the preacher, and on the soundness of his demonstrations? You refuse to believe truth, plainly set before you in the Bible, because the minister has failed in making out his point. Now, the truth of the point in question may have already received its decisive settlement, from the text delivered in your hearing. We may try, and take our own way of bringing the truth of your enmity against God, close and home upon your consciences. But, if there be truth in all the sayings of the Bible, enough has been already said, to undermine the security of your fancied attainments. It is said, that in our nature there is a rooted and an embodied character of hostility to our Maker. This should make the wisest and most sufficient among you feel that you are poor indeed,—and let other expedients, to press home the

melancholy truth fail, or be effectual as they may, this is surely enough to convince and to alarm you.

But, though we cannot add to the truth of God, there is such a thing as what the Apostle calls making that truth manifest to your consciences. Your own observation may attest the very same truth, which God announces to you in his word. And if it be a truth, respecting the state of your own heart, this agreement between what God says you are, and what you find yourselves to be, is often most powerfully instrumental, in reclaiming men to the acknowledgment of the truth, and bringing their heart under its influence. This is the very argument which compelled the faith of the woman of Samaria. "Come and see the man which told me all the things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" It is the very argument, by which many an unbeliever was convinced in the Apostle's days. The secrets of his heart were made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he worshipped God, and reported that God was in them, of a truth. We cannot make the assertion in the text stronger than God has made it already; but we may be able to guide your observations to that which is the subject of it—even to your own mind. We may lead you to attend more closely, and to view more distinctly, the state of your minds, than you have ever yet done. If your finding of the matter shall agree with God's saying about it, it may make the truth of the text tell with energy upon your consciences;—and it were well for one and all of us, that we obtained a more overwhelming sense of our necessities than we have ever yet gotten; that we saw ourselves in those true colours of deformity which really belong to us; that the inveteracy of our disease as sinners, were more known and more felt by us; that we could lift up the mantle of delusion, which the accomplishments of nature throw over the carnal mind, and by which they spread a most bewildering gloss over all the rebelliousness and ingratitude of the inner man. Could we but make you feel your need and your helplessness as sinners,—could we chase away from you the pride and the security of your fancied attainments; could we lead you to mourn and be in heaviness, under a sense of your alienations and idolatries, and risings of hatred against the God, who cre-

ated, and who sustains you ;—then might we look for the overtures of the gospel being more thankfully listened to, more cordially embraced, more rejoiced in as the alone suitable remedy to the wants and the sorenesses of your fallen nature,—then might we look for the attitude of self-dependence being broken down, and for all trust, and all glorying, being transferred from ourselves, and laid upon Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

It is no proof of love to God that we do many things, and that too with the willing consent of the mind, the performance of which is agreeable to his law. If the same thing might be done upon either of two principles, then the doing of it may only prove the existence of one of these principles, while the other has no presence or operation in the mind whatever. I do not steal, and the reason of it may be either that I love God, and so keep his commandments, or it may be that I have honourable feelings, and would spurn at the disgracefulness of such an action. This is only one example, but the bare statement of it serves for a thousand more. It lets us in at once to the decisive fact, that there are many principles of action applauded, and held in reverence, and most useful to society, and withal urging us to the performance of what, in the matter of it, is agreeable to the law of God, which may have a practical ascendency over a man whose heart is alienated from the love of God. Propose the question to yourself, Would not I do this good thing, or abstain from this evil thing, though God had no will in the matter ? If you would, then put not down what is altogether due to other principles to the principle of love to God, or a desire of pleasing him. The principle upon which you have acted may be respectable, and honourable, and amiable. We are not disputing all this. We are only saying, that it is not the love of God ; and should we hear any one of you assert, that I have nothing to reproach myself with, and that I give every body their own, and that I possess a fair character in society, and have done nothing to forfeit it, and that I have my share of generosity, and honour, and tenderness, and civility, our only reply is, that this may be very true. You may have a very large share of these, and of other estimable principles, but along with the possession of these many things, you may lack one thing, and that

one thing may be the love of God. An enlightened discerner of the heart may look into you, and say, with our Saviour in the text, "I know you that you have not the love of God in you."

It is no test whatever of your love to God, that you tolerate him, when he calls upon you, to do the things which your natural principles incline you to do, and which you would have done at any rate. But when he claims that place in your affections which you give to many of the objects of the world,—when he puts in for that share of your heart which you give to wealth, or pleasure, or reputation among men,—then is not God a weariness? and does not the inner man feel impatience and dislike at these grievous exactions; and when the will of God thwarts the natural current of your tastes and enjoyments, is not God, at the moment of urging that will, with all the natural authority which belongs to him, a positive offence to you?

How would you like the visit of a man whose presence broke up some arrangement that you had set your heart upon; or marred the enjoyment of some favourite scheme that you were going to put into execution? Would not you hate the visit? and if it were often repeated,—if the disappointments you received from this cause were frequent and perpetual,—if you saw a systematic design of thwarting you by these galling and numerous interruptions, would not you also cordially hate the visitor, and give the most substantial evidence of your hatred, too, by shunning him, or shutting him out? Now, is not God just such a visitor? O how many favourite schemes of enjoyment would the thought of him, and of his will, if faithfully admitted to the inner chambers of the mind, put to flight! How many fond calculations be given up about the world, the love of which is opposite to the love of the Father. How many trifling amusements behooved to be painfully surrendered, if a sense of God's will were to tell upon the conscience with all the energy that is due to it. How many darling habits abandoned, if the whole man were brought under the dominion of this imperious visitor;—how many affections torn away from the objects on which they are now fastened, if his presence were at all times attended to, and he was regarded with that affection which he at all times demands of us!

This may explain a fact, which we fear must come near to the conscience of many a respectable man, and that is, the recoil which he has often experienced, as if from some object of severe and unconquerable aversion, when the preacher urges upon his thoughts some scriptural representations either of the will or the character of God. Or take this fact in another way, and in which it presents itself, if not more strikingly, at least more habitually; and that is, the undeniable circumstance of God being shut out of his thoughts for the great majority of his time, and him feeling the same kind of ease, at the exclusion, as when he shuts the door on the most unwelcome of his visitors. The reason is, that the inner man, busied with other objects, would positively be offended at the intrusion of the thought of God. It is because, to admit him, with all his high claims and spiritual requirements into your mind, would be to disturb you in the enjoyment of objects which are better loved and more sought after than he. It is because your heart is occupied with idols, that God is shut out of it. It is because your heart is after another treasure. It is because your heart is set upon other things. Whether it be wealth, or amusement, or distinction, or the ease and the pleasures of life, we pretend not to know; but there is a something, which is your god, to the exclusion of the great God of heaven and earth. The Being who is upholding you all the time, and in virtue of whose preserving hand, you live, and think, and enjoy, is all the while unminded and unregarded by you. You look upon him as an interruption. It is of no consequence to the argument what the occupation of your heart be, if it is such an occupation as excludes God from it. It may be what the world calls a vicious occupation,—the pursuits of a dishonest, or the debaucheries of a profligate life,—and, in this case, the world has no objection to stigmatize you with enmity against God. Or it may be what the world calls an innocent occupation—amusement to make you happy, work to earn a subsistence, business to establish a liberal provision for your families. But your heart may be so given to it, that God is robbed of his portion of your heart altogether. Or it may be what the world calls an honourable occupation,—the pursuit of eminence in the walks

of science or of patriotism; and still there may be an exclusion, or a hatred, of the God who puts in for all things being done to his glory. Or it may be what the world calls an elegant occupation,—even that of a mind enamoured with the tastefulness of literature; but it may be so enamoured with this, that the God who created your mind, and all the tastes which are within it, and all the objects which are without it, and which minister to its most exquisite gratification,—this God, we say, may be turned away from with a feeling of the most neauseous antipathy, and you may give the most substantial evidence of your hatred to him, by ridding your thoughts of him altogether. Or, lastly, it may be what the world calls a virtuous occupation, even that of a mind bustling with the full play of its energies, among enterprizes of charity and plans of public good. Yet even here, wonderful as you may think it, there may be a total exclusion and forgetfulness of God; and, while the mind is filled and gratified with a rejoicing sense of its activity and its usefulness, it may be merely delighting itself with a constitutional gratification,—and God the author of that constitution, be never thought of,—or if thought of according to the holiness of his attibutes, and the nature of that friendship, opposite to the friendship of the world, which he demands of us, and the kind of employment which forms the reward and the happiness of his saints in eternity, even the praise and the contemplation of himself,—if thought of, we say, according to this his real character, and these the real requirements that he lays upon us, —even the man to whom the word yields the homage of virtue may think of his God with feelings of offensiveness and disgust.

There is nothing monstrous in all this, to the men of our world, seeing that they have each a share in that deep and lurking ungodliness, which has both so vitiated our nature, and so blinded all who inherit this nature, against a sense of its enormity. But only conceive how it must be thought of, and how the contemplation of it must be felt, among those who can look on character, with a spiritual and intelligent estimation. How must the pure eye of an angel be moved at such a spectacle of worthlessness,—and surely, in the records of heaven, this great moral peculiarity of our outcast race must stand en-

graven as that, which of all others, has the character of guilt, most nakedly and most essentially belonging to it. That the bosom of a thing formed should feel cold or indifferent to him who formed it,—that not a thought or an image should be so unwelcome to man, as that of his Maker, that the creature should thus turn round on its Creator, and eye disgust upon him,—that its every breath should be envenomed with hatred against him who inspired it,—or, if it be not hatred, but only unconcern, or disinclination, that even this should be the real disposition of a fashioned and sustained being, towards the hand of his Preserver,—there is a perversity here, which time may palliate for a season, but which, under a universal reign of justice, must at length be brought out to its adequate condemnation. And on that day, when the earth is to be burnt up, and all its flatteries shall have subsided, will it be seen of many a heart that rejoiced in the applause and friendship of this world, that, alienated from the love of God, it was indeed in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Nor does it palliate the representation which we have now given, that a God, in the fancied array of poetic loveliness—that a God of mere natural perfection, and without one other moral attribute than the single attribute of indulgence—that a God, divested of all which can make him repulsive to sinners, and, for this purpose, shorn of all those glories, which truth and authority, and holiness, throw around his character—that such a God should be idolized at times by many a sentimentalist. It would form no deduction from our enmity against the true God, that we gave an occasional hour to the worship of a graven image, made with our own hands—and it is just of as little significancy to the argument, that we feel an occasional glow of affection or of reverence, towards a fictitious being of our own imagination. If there be truth in the Bible, it is there where God has made an authentic exhibition of his nature,—and if God in Christ be an offence to you—if you dislike this way of approach—if you shrink from the contemplation of that Being, who bids you sanctify him in your hearts, and who claims such a preference in your regard, as shall dispossess your affections for all that is earthly—if you have no relish for the intercourse

of prayer, and of spiritual communion with such a God—if your memory neither love to recal him, nor your fancy to dwell upon him, nor he be the being with whom you greatly delight yourself, the habitation to which you resort continually,—then be assured, that amid the painted insignificancy of all your other accomplishments, your heart is not right with God; and he who is the Father of your existence, and of all that gladdens it, may still be to you a loathing and an abomination.

Neither does it palliate the representation which we have now offered, that we do many things with the direct object of doing that which is pleasing to God. It is true, there cannot be love where there is no desire to please; but it is as true, that there may be a desire to please where there is no love. Why, I may both hate and fear the man, whom I may find it very convenient to please; and to secure whose favour, I may practice a thousand arts of accommodation and compliance. I may comply by action—but instead of complying with my will, I may abominate the necessity which constrains me. I may be subject to his pleasure in my person, and in my performances —but you would not say, while hatred rankled within me, that I was subject to him with my mind. A sovereign may overrule the humours of a rebellious province, by the presence of his resistless military—but you would not say that there was any loyalty in this forced subordination. He may compel the bondage of their actual services—but you would not say, that it was in this part of his dominions, where the principle of subjection to him existed in the minds of the people. We have already affirmed, that though our will went along with a number of performances, which in the matter of them were agreeable to God's law—this was far from an unfailing indication of love to God; for there may be a thousand other constitutional principles, the residence and operation of which in the heart may give rise to these performances, while there was an utter distaste, and hostility on our part to God. They may be done, not because God wills the doing, but because the doing falls in with our humour, or our interest, or our vanity, or our instinctive gratification. But now we are prepared to go farther, and say, that they may be done, because God wills the doing, and

yet there may be an utter want of subjection in the mind, to the law of God. The terror of his power may constrain you to many acts of obedience, even as the call, "Flee from the coming wrath," told on the disciples of John the Baptist. But obedience may be rendered to all the requirements of this prophet. Thieves, and swearers, and sabbath-breakers, may, under the fear of the coming vengeance, give up their respective enormities, and yet their minds be altogether carnal, and utterly destitute of subjection to the law of God. There may be the obedience of the hand while there is the gall of bitterness in the heart, at the necessity which constrains it. It may not be the consenting of the mind, to the law of him whom you delight to please, and to honour. Now, this is the service for which it is the aim of Christianity to prepare you. It is by putting that law, which was graven on tables of stone, upon the tables of your heart, that it enables you to yield that obedience, which is acceptable to God. He is grieved at the reluctancy of your services. No performances can satisfy him, while your heart remains in shut and shielded alienation against him. What he wants, is to gain the friendship and the confidence of his creatures; and he feels all the concern of a wounded and mortified father when he knocks at the door of your heart and finds its affections to be away from him. He condescends to plead the matter, and with the tenderness of a disappointed father, does he say, "Wherein have I wearied you, O children of Israel, testify agsinst me?" You may fear him; you may heap sacrifices upon his altar; you may bring the outer man to something like a slavish obedience, at his bidding, but till your heart be subdued, by that great process, which all who are his spiritual subjects must undergo, you are carnal, and you do not love him. Your obedience is like a body without a soul. The very principle which gives it all its value, is wanting. It is this, which turns the whole to bitterness. It is this, which, with all the bustling activity of your services, keeps you dead in trespasses and sins. It is this which mars every religious performance, and imparts the character of rebelliousness to every one item, in the list of your plausible and ostentatious duties. There is not one of them which is not accompanied with an act of dis-

obedience, and that too, to the first and greatest commandment, by which we are called upon to love the Lord with all our heart, strength, and soul. Though the hand should be subject,—though the mouth should be subject,—though all the organs of the outer man should be subject; yet it availeth nothing, if the will of the mind is not subject. I could sell all my goods to feed the poor. I could compel my hand to sign an order to that effect,—and I could keep my hand from reversing that order till it was executed. But all this I may do, says Paul, and yet have nothing, because I have not charity. It is not the act of well-doing to your neighbour, but a principle of love to your neighbour, on which God stamps the testimony of his approbation. In like manner, it is not the act of well-doing to God, but the principle of love to God, which he values;—and if this be withheld from him, you are carnal; and with all your painful and multiplied attempts at obedience, your mind is not subject to the law of God.

We shall conclude, at present, with two short reflections.

First, If any of you are convinced of the justness of the representations which we have now given, you will perceive that your guilt in the sight of God, may be of a far deeper and more alarming kind, than men are generally aware of. And such a view of the matter may be quite intolerable to him who nauseates the peculiarities of the gospel,—to him who has a contempt for the foolishness of that preaching, of which the great burden is Jesus Christ, and him crucified,—to him, in a word, whom the true description of our moral disease, must terrify or offend, —seeing that he carries a distaste in his heart toward the alone remedy, by which the disease can be met and extirpated.

But secondly, There is another class of people, whom such a view of the actual state of human nature ought to tranquilize, by bringing their minds out of perplexity, into a state of firm and confident decision. There are often in a congregation, a set of hearers not yet shut up into the faith, but approaching towards it,—with a growing taste for the Christianity of the New Testament, but without a full and a final acquiescence in it,—with an opening and an enlarging sense of the importance of the gospel, but still halting between two opinions respecting

it; who, in particular, are not sure where their sole dependence for salvation should be placed, whether singly upon their own performances, or singly upon the righteousness of Christ, or jointly upon both. Now, we trust that the lesson of our text may have the effect with some, of bringing this unsettled account more speedily to its termination. You may have hitherto, perhaps, been under the impression, that the condition of man was not just so bad as to require a Saviour, who must undertake the whole of his cure, and bring about the whole of his salvation. You have attempted to share with the Saviour in the matter of your redemption. Instead of looking upon it with the eye of the Apostle, as being all of grace, or all of works, you have in some way or other, attempted a compromise between them; and this has the undoubted effect of keeping you at a distance from Christ. You have not felt you entire need of him, and therefore you have not leaned in close and constant dependence upon him. But let the torch of a spiritual law be lifted over your characters, and through the guise of its external decencies reveal to you the mountain of iniquity within; let the deformity of the heart be made known, and you become sensible of the fruitlessness of every endeavour, so long as the consent of a willing cordiality is withheld from the person and authority of God; let the utter powerlessness of all your doings, be contrasted with the perversity of your stubborn and unmanageable desires, and the case is seen in all its helplessness;—you become desperate of salvation in one way, and you are led to look for it in another way. The question, whether salvation is of grace or of works, receives its most decisive settlement;—when thus driven away from one term of the alternative, you are compelled, as your only resource, to the other term. You feel that nothing else will do for your acceptance with God, but your acceptance of the offered Saviour. You stand at the foot of the cross,—you make an absolute surrender of yourself to the terms of the gospel.

And we know not a more blissful or a more memorable event, in the history of the human soul, than, when convinced that there is no other righteousness than in the merits, and no other sanctification than in the grace of the Saviour, it henceforth

glories only in his cross; and now, that every other expedient of reformation has been tried, and failed of its accomplishment, it takes to the remaining one of crying mightily to God, and pressing, at a throne of grace, the supplication of the Psalmist, "Create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

One thing is certain; you are welcome, at this moment, to lay hold of the righteousness of God, in Christ Jesus; you are welcome, at this moment, to the use of his prevailing name in your prayers to the Father; you are welcome, at this moment, to the plea of his meritorious obedience, and of his atoning death: and you are welcome, at this moment, to the promise of the Spirit, given unto all who believe, whereby the enmity of their carnal minds, will be done away,—God will no longer be regarded with antipathy and disgust,—he will appear in the face of Jesus Christ as a reconciled Father,—he will pour upon you the spirit of adoption,—you will walk before him without fear, —and those bonds being loosed, wherewith you were formerly held, you will yield to him the willing obedience of those whose hearts are enlarged, and who run, with delight, in the way of his commandments.

SERMON XIV.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL TO DISSOLVE THE ENMITY OF THE HUMAN HEART AGAINST GOD.

EPHESIANS ii. 16.

"Having slain the enmity thereby."

II. We shall now consider how it is that the gospel of Jesus Christ, suits its application to this great moral disease.

The necessity of some singular expedient, for restoring the love of God to the alienated heart of man, will appear from the utter impossibility of bringing this about by any direct application of authority whatever. For, do you think that the delivery of the law of love, in his hearing, as a positive and indispensable enactment coming forth from the legislature of heaven will do it? You may as well pass a law, making it imperative upon him to delight in pain, and to feel comfort on a bed of torture? Or, do you think, that you will ever give a practical establishment to the law of love, by surrounding it with accumulated penalties? This may irritate, or it may terrify,—but for the purpose of begetting any thing like attachment, one may as well think of lashing another into tender regard for him. Or, do you think, that the terrors of the coming vengeance will ever incline a human being to love the God who threatens him? Powerful as these terrors are, in persuading man to turn from the evil of his ways,—they most assuredly do not form the artillery by which the heart of man can be carried. They draw not forth a single affection, but the affection of fear. They never can charm the human bosom into a feeling of attachment to God. And it goes to prove the necessity of some singular expedient, for restoring man to fellowship with his Maker; that

the only obedience on which this fellowship can be perpetuated, is an obedience which no threatenings can force,—to which no warnings of displeasure can reclaim,—which all the solemn proclamations of law and justice cannot carry,—and all the terrors and severities of a sovereignty resting on power, as its only foundation, can never subdue. The utterance of the words, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, or perish everlastingly, can no more open the shut and alienated heart of man, that it can open a gate of iron. Multiply these arguments of terror as you may,—arm them with tenfold energy, and make them to fall in thunder on the sinner's ears,—tell him of the God of judgment, and manifest to him the frown of his angry countenance,—lay before him the grim aspect of his impending death, and spread a deeper mantle of despair over the vast field of that eternity which is on the other side of it;—You may disquiet him, and right that he should be so,—you may prevail on him to give up many evil doings, and right that the whole urgency of the coming wrath should be employed to make him give them up immediately,—you may set him a trembling at the power of God, and better this than spending his guilty career, in thoughtlessness and unconcern, about the great Lawgiver;—but where, in the midst of all this, shall we find obedience to the very first and greatest commandment of the law? Has this obedience been yet so much as entered on? Has love to God so much as reached the infancy of its existence, in that heart which is now beginning to be agitated by its terrors? Amid all the bitterness of remorse, and all the fearful looking for of judgment, and all the restless anxieties of conscious guilt, and anticipated vengeance, tell us, if a single particle of tenderness towards God, has any place in this restless and despairing bosom? Tell us, if it act as an element at all, in this wild war of turbulence and disorder? Or, has it yet begun to dawn upon the mind, and spread its salutary and composing charm over that dark scene of conflict, under which many a sinner has to sustain the burden of the wearisome nights that are appointed to him? You may seek for love to God throughout all the chambers of his heart, and seek in vain. The man may be acting such reformations as he is driven to, and may be clothing

himself in such visible decencies, as he feels himself compelled to put on, and may be labouring away at the drudgery of such observances as he thinks will give him relief from the corrosions of that undying worm, which never ceases to goad him with its reproaches; but as to the love of God, there is as grim and determined an exclusion of this principle as ever,—that avenue to his heart, has never been unlocked, through which it might be made to find its way,—every former argument, so far from having dissolved the barrier, has only served to rivet and to make it more unmoveable. And the difficulty still lies upon us,—how are we to deposit in the heart of man, the only right principle of obedience to God,—and to lead him onward in the single way of a pure, and spiritual, and substantial repentance?

This, then, is a case of difficulty, and, in the Bible, God is said to have lavished all the riches of his unsearchable wisdom on the business of managing it. No wonder that to his angels it appeared a mystery, and that they desired to look into it. It appears a matter of direct and obvious facility to intimidate man,—and to bring his body into a forced subordination to all the requirements. But the great matter was, how to attach man,—how to work in him a liking to God, and a relish for his character;—or, in other words, how to communicate to human obedience, that principle, without which, it is no obedience at all,—to make him serve God, because he loved him; and to run in the way of all his commandments, because this was the thing in which he greatly delighted himself. To lay upon us the demand of satisfaction for his violated law, could not do it. To press home the claims of justice upon any sense of authority within us, could not do it. To bring forward, in threatening array, the terrors of his judgment, and of his power against us, could not do it. To unveil the glories of that throne where he sitteth in equity, and manifest to his guilty creatures the awful inflexibilities of his truth and righteousness, could not do it. To look out from the cloud of vengeance, and trouble our darkened souls as he did those of the Egyptians of old, with the aspect of a menacing Deity, could not do it. To spread the field of an undone eternity before us, and tell us of those dreary abodes where each criminal hath his bed in hell, and the centuries of

despair which pass over him are not counted, because there no seasons roll, and the unhappy victims of the tribulation, and the wrath, and the anguish, know, that for the mighty burden of the sufferings which weigh upon them, there is no end, and no mitigation; this prospect appalling as it is, and coming home upon the belief with all the characters of the most immutable certainty, could not do it. The affections of the inner man remain as unmoved as ever, under the successive and repeated influence of all these dreadful applications. There is not one of them, which, instead of conciliating, does not stir up a principle of resistance; and, subject any human creature to the treatment of them all, and to nothing else, and he may tremble at God, and shrink from the contemplation of God, and feel an overpowering awe at the thought of God, when that thought visits him;—but we maintain, that not one particle of influence has been sent into his heart, to make him love God. Under such applications as these, we can conceive the creature, gathering a new energy from despair, and mustering up a stouter defiance than ever, to the God who threatens him. Strange contest between the thing formed and him who formed it;—but we see it exhibited among the determined votaries of wickedness in life; and it is the very contest which gives its moral aspect to hell throughout all eternity. There, God reigns in vindictive majesty, and there, every heart of every outcast, sheathed in impenetrable hardness, mutters its blasphemies against him. O hideous and revolting spectacle! and how awful to think, that the unreclaimed sons of profligacy, who pour along our streets, and throng our markets, and form the fearful majority in almost every chamber of business, and in every workshop of industry, are thither speeding their infatuated way! What a wretched field of contemplation is around us, when we see on every side of it the mutual encouragement,—the everplying allurements,—the tacit, though effectual and well understood, combination, sustaining, over the whole face of this alienated world, a firm and systematic rebellion against God! We are not offering an exaggerated picture when we say, that within reach of the walk of a single hour, there are thousands, and thousands more, who have cast away from them the authority

of God; and who have been nerved by all his threatenings into a more determined attitude of wickedness; and who glory in their unprincipled dissipations; and who, without one sigh at the moving spectacle of ruined innocence, will, in the hearing of companions younger than themselves, scatter their pestilential levities around them, and care not though the hope of parents, and the yet unvitiated delicacy of youth, shall wither and expire under the contagion of their ruffian example; and will patronize every step of that progress which leads from one depravity to another, till their ill fated proselyte made as much the child of hell as themselves, shall share in that common ruin which, in the great day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, will come forth from the storehouse of his wrath, in one mighty torrent, on the heads of all who boast of their iniquity. We have now touched on the limits of a subject of which half its horrors are untold; but through which, the minister, of the counsels of heaven must clear his intrepid way, in spite of all its painfulness. We will not pursue it at present, but neither will we count the digression out of place—should a single parent among you be led, from what we have now uttered, to be jealous over his children with a godly jealousy, and not to suffer those, for whose eternity he is so deeply responsible, to take their random direction through society, just where the prospects of business, and of worldly advantage, may chance to carry them; to calculate on the possibilities of moral corruption, as well as on the possibilities of lucrative employment; to look well to exposures and acquaintances, and hours of social entertainment, as well as to the common-place object of a situation in the world. And when you talk of a good line for your children, just think a little more of the line that leadeth to eternity, and have a care lest you be the instrument of putting them on such a path of danger, that it shall only be by the very rarest miracle of grace, that your helpless young can be kept from falling, or be renewed again into repentance.

But the difficulty in question still remains unresolved. How then is this regeneration to be wrought, if no threatenings can work it,—if no terrors of judgment can soften the heart into that love of God, which forms the chief feature of repentance,—if

all the direct applications of law and of righteous authority, and of its tremendous and immutable sanctions, so far from attaching man in tenderness to his God, have only the effect of impressing a violent recoil upon all his affections, and, by the hardening influence of despair, of stirring up in his bosom a more violent antipathy than ever? Will the high and solemn proclamations of a menacing Deity not do it? This is not the way in which the heart of man can be carried. He is so constituted, that the law of love can never, never be establised within him by the engine of terror; and here is the barrier to this regeneration on the part of man. But if a threat of justice cannot do it, will an act of forgiveness do it? This again is not the way in which God can admit the guilty to acceptance. He is so constituted, that his truth cannot be trampled upon, and his government cannot be despoiled of its authority, and its sanctions cannot, with impunity, be defied, and every solemn utterance of the Deity cannot but find its accomplishment, in such a way as may vindicate his glory, and make the whole creation he has formed stand in awe of its Almighty Sovereign. And here is another barrier on the part of God; and that economy of redemption, in which a dead and undiscerning world see no skilfulness to admire, and no feature of graciousness to allure, was so planned, in the upper counsels of heaven, that it maketh known, to principalities and powers, the manifold wisdom of Him who devised it. The men of this infidel generation, whose every faculty is so bedimmed by the grossness of sense, that they cannot lay hold of the realities of faith, and cannot appreciate them,—to them the barriers we have now insisted on, which lie in the way of man, taking God into his love, and of God taking man into his acceptance, may appear to be so many faint and shadowy considerations, of which they feel not the significancy; but, to the pure and intellectual eye of angels, they are substantial obstacles, and One Mighty to save had to travail in the greatness of his strength, in order to move them away. The Son of God descended from heaven, and he took upon him the nature of man, and he suffered in his stead, and he consented that the whole burden of offended justice should fall upon him, and he bore in his own body on the tree, the weight of all

those accomplishments by which his Father behooved to be glorified, and after having magnified the law, and made it honourable, by pouring out his soul unto the death for us, he went up on high, and by an arm of everlasting strength, levelled that wall of partition which lay across the path of acceptance; and thus it is, that the barrier on the part of God is done away, and he, with untarnished glory, can dispense forgiveness over the whole extent of a guilty creation, because he can be just, while he is the justifier of them who believe in Jesus.

And if the barrier, on the part of God, is thus moved aside, why not the barrier on the part of man? Does not the wisdom of redemption show itself here also? Does it not embrace some skilful contrivance, by which it penetrates those mounds that beset the human heart, and ward the entrance of the principle of love away from it, and which all the direct applications of terror and authority, have only the effect of fixing more immoveably upon their basis? Yes it does,—for it changes the aspect of the Deity towards man; and were man only to have faith in the announcements of the gospel, so as to see God with the eye of his mind under this new aspect,—love to God would spring up in his heart, as the unfailing consequence. Let man see God as he sets himself forth in this wonderful revelation, and let him believe the reality of what he sees; and he cannot but love the Being he is employed in contemplating. Without this gospel, he may see him to be a God of justice; but he cannot do this without seeing the frown of severity directed against himself, a wretched offender: With this gospel, he sees the full burden of violated justice borne away from him; and God stands before him unrobed of all his severities, and tenderly inviting him to draw near through that blood of atonement which was shed, the just for the unjust, to bring the sinner unto God. Without this gospel, he may see the truth of God; but he sees it pledged, to the fulfilment of the most awful threatenings against him: With this gospel, he sees the full weight of all these accomplishments, resting on the head of the great sacrifice; and God's truth is now fully embarked on the most cheering assurances of pardon, on the most liberal invitations of good will, on the most exceeding great and precious promises. With-

out this gospel, he may see the government of God leaning on the pillars of that immutability which upholds it; but this very immutability is to him the sentence of despair; and how can he love that face, on which are stamped the characters of a stern and vindictive majesty? With this gospel, the face of God stands legibly revealed to him in other characters. That law which, resting on the solemn authority of its firm and unalterable requirements, demanded a fulfilment, up to the last jot and tittle of it, has been magnified, and has been made honourable, by one illustrious sufferer, who put forth the greatness of his strength, in that dark hour of the travail of his soul, when he bore the burden of all its penalties. That wrath which should have been discharged on the guilty millions he died for, was all concentred upon him, who took upon himself the chastisement of our peace, and on that day of mysterious agony, drank, to the very dregs, the cup of our expiation. And God, who planned the whole work of this wonderful redemption,—God, who in love to a guilty world sent his Son amongst us to accomplish it,—God, who rather than lose his alienated creatures, as he could not strip his eternal throne of a single attribute that supported it, awoke the sword of vengeance against his fellow, that on him the truth and the justice of the Deity might receive their most illustrious vindication,—God, who, out of Christ, sits surrounded with all the darkness of unapproachable majesty, is now God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses; his tender mercy is now free to rejoice amid all the glory of his other bright and untarnished perfections, and he pours the expression of this tenderness with an unsparing hand, over the whole extent of his sinful creation—and he lets himself down to the language of a beseeching supplicant, praying that each and every one of us might be reconciled unto him—and, putting on a winning countenance of invitation to the guiltiest of us all, he tells us, that if we only come to him through the appointed mediator, he will blot out, as with a thick cloud, our transgressions,—and that, as if carried away to a land that was not inhabited, he will make no more mention of them.

And thus it is, that the goodness of God destroyeth the en-

mity of the human heart. When every other argument fails, this, if perceived by the eye of faith, finds its powerful and persuasive way through every barrier of resistance. Try to approach the heart of man by the instruments of terror and of authority, and it will disdainfully repel you. There is not one of you skilled in the management of human nature, who does not perceive, that, though this may be a way of working on the other principles of our constitution,—of working on the fears of man, or on his sense of interest, this is not the way of gaining by a single hair-breadth on the attachments of his heart. Such a way may force, or it may terrify, but it never, never can endear; and after all the threatening array of such an influence as this, is brought to bear upon man, there is not one particle of service it can extort from him, but what is all rendered in the spirit of a painful and reluctant bondage. Now, this is not the service which prepares for heaven. This is not the service which assimilates men to angels. This is not the obedience of those glorified spirits, whose every affection harmonizes with their every performance; and the very essence of whose piety consists of delight in God, and the love they bear to him. To bring up man to such an obedience as this, his heart behooved to be approached in a peculiar way; and no such way is to be found, but within the limits of the Christian revelation. There alone you see God, without injury to his other attributes, plying the heart of man with the irresistible argument of kindness. There alone do you see the great Lord of heaven and of earth, setting himself forth to the most worthless and the most wandering of his children,—putting forth his own hand to the work of healing the breach which sin had made between them,—telling him that his word could not be set aside, and his threatenings could not be mocked, and his justice could not be defied and trampled on, and that it was not possible for his perfections to receive the slightest taint in the eyes of the creation he had thrown around him; but that all this was provided for, and not a single creature within the compass of the universe he had formed, could now say, that forgiveness to man was degrading to the authority of God, and that by the very act of atonement, which poured a glory over all the high attributes of his charac-

ter, his mercy might now burst forth without limit, and without controul, upon a guilty world, and the broad flag of invitation be unfurled in the sight of all its families.

Let the sinner, then, look to God through the medium of such a revelation; and the sight which meets him there, may well tame the obstinacy of that heart, which had wrapped itself up in impenetrable hardness against the force of every other consideration. Now that the storm of the Almighty's wrath has been discharged upon him who bore the burden of the world's atonement, he has turned his throne of glory into a throne of grace, and cleared away from the pavilion of his residence, all the darkness which encompassed it. The God who dwelleth there, is God in Christ; and the voice he sends from it, to this dark and rebellious province of his mighty empire, is a voice of the most beseeching tenderness. Good will to men is the announcement with which his messengers come fraught to a guilty world; and, since the moment in which it burst upon mortal ears from the peaceful canopy of heaven, may the ministers of salvation take it up, and go round with it among all the tribes and individuals of the species. Such is the real aspect of God towards you. He cannot bear that his alienated children should be finally and everlastingly away from him. He feels for you all the longing of a parent bereaved of his offspring. To woo you back again unto himself, he scatters among you the largest and the most liberal assurances, and with a tone of imploring tenderness, does he say to one and to all of you, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?" He has no pleasure in your death. He does not wish to glorify himself by the destruction of any one of you. "Look to me all ye ends of the earth, and be saved," is the wide and the generous announcement, by which he would recal, from the very outermost limits of his sinful creation, the most worthless and polluted of those who have wandered away from him. Now give us a man who perceives, with the eye of his mind, the reality of all this, and you give us a man in possession of the principle of faith. Give us a man in possession of this faith; and his heart shielded, as it were, against the terrors of a menacing Deity, is softened and subdued, and resigns its every affection at the moving spectacle

of a beseeching Deity; and thus it is that faith manifests the attribute which the Bible assigns to it, of working by love. Give us a man in possession of this love; and animated as he is, with the living principle of that obedience, where the willing and delighted consent of the inner man goes along with the performance of the outer man, his love manifests the attribute which the Bible assigns to it, when it says, "This is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments." And thus it is, amid the fruitlessness of every other expedient, when power threatened to crush the heart which it could not soften,—when authority lifted its voice and laid on man an enactment of love which it could not carry,—when terror shot its arrows, and they dropped ineffectual from that citadel of the human affections, which stood proof against the impression of every one of them,—when wrath mustered up its appalling severities, and filled that bosom with despair which it could not fill with the warmth of a confiding attachment,—then the kindness of an inviting God was brought to bear on the heart of man, and got an opening through all its mysterious avenues. Goodness did what the nakedness of power could not do. It found its way through all the intricacies of the human constitution, and there, depositing the right principle of repentance, did it establish the alone effectual security for the right purposes, and the right fruits of repentance.

SERMON XV.

THE EVILS OF FALSE SECURITY.

JEREMIAH vi. 14.

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, Peace; when there is no peace."

We must all have remarked, on what a slight and passing consideration people will dispose of a question which relates to the interest of their eternity; and how strikingly this stands contrasted with the very deep, and earnest, and long sustained attention, which they bestow on a question that relates to their interest, or their fortune, in this world. Ere they embark, for example, on an enterprize of trade, they will look at all the sides, and all the possibilities of the speculation; and every power of thought within them, will be put to its busiest exercise, and they will enter upon it with much fearfulness, and they will feel an anxious concern in every step, and every new evolution, of such an undertaking. Compare this with the very loose and summary way in which they make up their minds, about the chance of happiness in another world. See at how easy a rate they will be satisfied with some maxim of security, the utterance of which serves as a bar against all further prosecution of the subject. Behold the use they make of some hastily assumed principle in religion,—not for the purpose of fastening their minds upon it, but for the purpose, in fact of hurrying their minds away from it. For it must be observed of the people to whom we allude, that, in spite of all their thoughtlessness about the affairs of the soul, they are not altogether without some opinion on the matter; and in which opinion there generally is comprised all the theology of which they are possessed. Without some such

opinion, even the most regardless of men might feel themselves in a state of restlessness ; and therefore it is, however seldom they are visited with any thought about eternity, and however gently this thought touches them, and however quickly it passes away, to be replaced by some of the more urgent vanities and interests of time, yet, with most men, there is something like an actual making up of their minds, on this awfully important subject. There is a settlement they have come to about it, which, generally speaking, serves them to the end of their days ; —and on the strength of which, there are many who can hush within them, every alarm of conscience, and repel from without them, the whole force of a preacher's demonstration, and all that power of disquietude which lies in his faithful and impressive warnings.

We speak in reference to a very numerous set of individuals, among the upper and middling classes of society. There is a class of what may be called slender and sentimental religionists, who do profess a reverence for the matter, and maintain many of its outward decencies, and are visited with occasional thoughts, and occasional feelings of tenderness about death, and duty, and eternity, and would be shocked at the utterance of an infidel opinion ; and with all these symptoms of a religious inclination about them, have their minds very comfortably made up, and altogether free from any apprehension, either of present wrath, or of coming vengeance. Now, on examining the ground of their tranquillity, we are at a loss to detect a single ingredient of that peace and joy in believing, which we read of among the Christians of the new Testament. It is not that Christ is set forth a propitiation for their sins,—it is not that they stagger not at the promise of God, because of unbelief,—it is not that the love of him is shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost,—it is not that they carry along with them any consciousness whatever, of a growing conformity to the image of the Saviour,—it is not that their calling and their election are made sure to them, by the successful diligence with which they are cultivating the various accomplishments of the Christian character ;—there is not one of these ingredients, will we venture to say, which enters into the satisfaction that many

feel with their own prospects, and into the complacency they have in their own attainments, and into their opinion, that God is looking to them with indulgence and friendship. With most of them, there is not only an ignorance, but a positive disgust, about these things. They associate with them the charges of methodism, and mysticism, and fanaticism: and meanwhile cherish in their own hearts, a kind of impregnable confidence, resting entirely on some other foundation.

We believe the real cause of their tranquillity to be, just that eternity is not seen nearly enough, or urgently enough, to disturb them. It stands so far away on the back ground of their contemplation, that they are almost entirely taken up with the intervening objects. Any glimpse they have of the futurity which lies on the other side of time, is so faint, and so occasional, that its concerns never come to them with the urgency of a matter on hand. It is not so much because they think in a particular way on this topic, that they feel themselves to be at peace. It is rather, because they think so little of it. Still, however, they do have a transient and occasional thought, and it is all on the side of tranquillity; and could this thought be exposed as a minister of deceitful complacency to the heart, it may have the effect of working in it a salutary alarm, and of making the possessor of it see the nakedness of his condition, and of undermining every other trust but a trust in the offered salvation of the gospel, and of unsettling the blind and easy confidence of his former days, and of prompting him with the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" and of leading him to try this question by the light of revelation, and to prosecute it to a scriptural conclusion, till he came to the answer of, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

What is the way, then, in which they do actually make up their minds upon this subject? There is, in the first place, a pretty general admission, that we are sinners, though along with this, there is a disposition to palliate the enormity of sin, and to gloss it over with the gentle epithet of an infirmity. It is readily allowed, then, that we have our infirmities; and then to make all right, and secure, and comfortable, the sentiment with which they bring the matter round again, is that, though we

have our infirmities, God is a merciful God, and he will overlook them. This vague, and general, and indistinct apprehension of the attribute of mercy is the anchor of their hope; not a very sure and steadfast one certainly, but just as sure and as steadfast, as, in their peaceful state of unconcern, they have any demand for. A vessel in smooth water needs not be very strongly fastened in her moorings; and really any convictions of sin they have, agitate them so gently, that a very slender principle indeed, uttered occasionally by the mouth, and with no distinct or perceptible hold upon the heart, is enough to quiet and subdue all that is troublesome within them. A slight hurt needs but a slight remedy, and however virulent the disease may be, yet, if the patient be but gently alarmed, a gentle application is enough to pacify him in the mean time. Now, a tasteful and a tender sentiment about the goodness of God, is just such an application. He will not be severe upon our weaknesses; he will not cast a glance of stern and unrelenting indignation upon us. It is true, that there is to be met with, among the vilest dregs and refuse of society, a degree of profligacy, for which it would really be too much to expect forgiveness. The use of hell is for the punishment of such gross and enormous wickedness as this. But the people who are so very depraved, and so very shocking, stand far beneath the place which we occupy in the scale of character. We, with our many amiable, and good, and neighbourlike points and accomplishments, are fair and befitting subjects for the kindness of God. When we err, we shall betake ourselves to a trust in that indulgence, which gives to our religion the aspect of so much cheerfulness; and we will school down all that is disquieting, by a sentiment of confidence in that mercy which is soothing to our hearts, and which we delight to hear expatiated upon, in terms of tastefulness, by the orators of a genteel and cultivated piety.

Under this loose system of confidence, then, by which the peace of so many a sinner is upheld, it is the general mercy of God on which he rests. I shall, therefore, in the first place, endeavour to prove the vanity of such a confidence; and, in the second place, the evils of it.

I.—There is one obvious respect, in which this mercy that is so slenderly spoken of, and so vaguely trusted in, is not in unison with truth; and that is, it is not the mercy which has been made the subject of an actual offer from God to man, in the true message that he has been pleased to deliver to the world. In this message, God makes a free offer of his mercy, no doubt; but he offers it on a particular footing, and on that footing only, will he have it to be received. Along with the revelation he makes of his attribute of mercy, he bids us look to the particular way, in which he chooses that attribute to be put forth. The man who steps forward to relieve you of your debts, by an act of gratuitous kindness, may surely reserve the privilege of doing it in his own way; and whether it be by a present in goods, or by a present in money, or by an order upon a third person, or by the appointment of one whom he makes the agent of his beneficence, and whom he asks you to correspond with and to draw upon, it would surely be most preposterous in you to quarrel with his generosity, because it would have been more to your taste, had it come to you through a different channel of conveyance. He has a fair right of insisting upon his own way of it; and if you will not acquiesce in this way, and he leaves you under your burden, you have nothing to complain of. You might have liked it better, had he authorized you to draw upon himself, rather than on the agent he has fixed upon. But no; he has his reasons, and he persists in his own way of it, and you must either go along with this way, or throw yourself out of the benefit of his generosity altogether. It is conceivable that, in spite of all this, you may be so very perverse as to draw upon himself, instead of drawing upon the authorized agent. Well, the effect is, just that your draft is dishonoured, and your debt still lies upon you; and, by your wilful resistance to the plan of relief laid down, are left to remain under the full weight of your embarrassments.

And so of God. He may, and he actually has stepped forward, to relieve us from that debt of sin under which we lie. But he has taken his own way of it. He has not left us to dictate the matter to him,—but he himself has found out a ransom. He offers us eternal life; but he tells us where this is to be

found, even in his Son, and he bids us look unto him, and be saved; and he says, that he who hath the Son hath life, and that he who believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him. To restrain, as it were, our immediate approaches to himself, he reveals an agent, a Mediator between God and man,—and he lets us know, that no one cometh unto the Father, but by him. He makes a free offer of salvation,—but it is in and through Jesus Christ, to whom the whole revealed word of God directs our eye, as the prime agent in the recovery of a guilty world. To say that we have our infirmities, but God is merciful, is like drawing direct upon God himself. But God tells us that he will not be so drawn upon. He chooses, and has he not the right of choosing, to bestow all his favours upon a guilty world, in and through his Son Christ Jesus? If you choose to object to this way, you must just abide by the consequences. The offer is made. God sets himself forward as merciful. But he lets you know, at the same time, the particular way in which he chooses to be so. This way may be an offence to you. You would perhaps have liked better, had there been no Christ, no preaching of his cross, nothing said about his cleansing, and peace-speaking blood,—in a word, nothing of all that which forms the burden of methodistical sermons, and which, if met with in the New Testament at all, is only to be found in what you may think its dark and mystical passages. It would have been more congenial to your taste, perhaps, had you been left to the undisturbed enjoyment of your own soothing and elegant conceptions,—could you just have gone direct to God himself, whom the eye of your imagination had stripped of all tremendous severity against sin, of all the pure and holy jealousies of his nature, of all that is majestic in the high attributes of truth and righteousness. A God singly possessed of tenderness, in virtue of which, he would smile connivance at all our infirmities, and bend an indulgent eye over the waywardness of a heart devoted with all its affections to the vanities and pleasures of time,—this would be a God highly suited to the taste and convenience of a guilty world. But, alas! there is no such God. To trust in the mercy of such a Being as this, is to lean on a nonentity of your own imagination. It is to be led astray, by

circle of angels, and archangels, and seraphim, and cherubim, who have all heard his awful proclamations against the children of iniquity,—if they see that any one of them may, by a mere act of confidence in his mercy, turn all that has been uttered against them into an unmeaning parade? Where, in a word, are all those sanctions and securities which can alone make the government of the Deity, to be a government at all? These are all questions which the people to whom we allude, never think of entertaining; nor do they feel the slightest concern about them; and they count it quite enough, if they can just work themselves up into such a tolerable feeling of security, as that they shall not be disturbed in the quiet enjoyment of the good things of this life, which form all in fact that their hearts long after, and which, if only permitted to retain in peace, they positively care not for the glory of God, or how shall it be kept inviolate. This is not their affair. The engrossing desire of their bosoms, is just a selfish desire after their own ease; and the strange preparation for that heaven, the unceasing song of which is, Holy and righteous are thy judgments, O thou King of Saints, is such a habit of confidence, as lays prostrate all the majesty of these high and unchangeable perfections.

And yet if you examine these people closely, you will obtain their consent to the position, that there is a law, and that the human race are bound to obedience, and that the authority of the law is supported by sanctions, and that the truth, and justice, and dignity of the Supreme Being, are involved in these sanctions being enforced and executed. They do not refuse the tenet, that man is an accountable subject, and that God is a judge and a lawgiver. All that we ask of them, then, is, to examine the account which this subject has to render, and they will find, in characters too glaring to be resisted, that, with the purest and most perfect individual amongst us, it is a wretched account of guilt and of deficiency. That law, which is held to be in full authority and operation over us, has been most unquestionably violated. Now, what is to be made of this? Is the subject to rebel, and disobey every hour, and the king, by a perpetual act of indulgence, to efface every character of truth and dignity from his government? Do this and you depose the

legislator from his throne. You reduce the sanctions of his law to a name, and a mockery. You bring down the high economy of heaven, to the standard of human convenience. You pull the fabric of God's moral government to pieces; and unsubstantiate all the solemnity of his proclaimed sayings,—all the lofty annunciations of the law, and of the prophets,—all that is told of the mighty apparatus of the day of judgment, all that revelation points to, or conscience can suggest, of a living and reigning God, who will not let himself down to be affronted, or trampled upon by the creatures whom he has formed.

They who, in profession, admit the truth of God, and yet take comfort from his mercy, without looking to him who bare in his own person, the accomplishment of all the threatenings, do in fact turn that truth into a lie. They who, in profession, admit the justice of God, and yet trust in the remission of their sins, without any distinct acknowledgment of him on whom God has laid the burden of their condemnation, do in fact prove, that in their mouths justice is nothing but an unmeaning articulation. They who in profession, admit the authority of those great and unchanging principles, which preside over the whole of God's moral administration, and yet assign to him such a loose and easy connivance at iniquity, as by a mere act of tenderness, to recal the every denunciation that he had uttered against it, do in fact put forth a sacrilegious hand to the pillars of that immutability, by which the government of creation is upheld and perpetuated. Let them rest assured, that there is no way of reconciliation, but such a way as shields all the holy, and pure, and inflexible attributes of the Divinity, from degradation and contempt.

Out of that hiding-place which is made known in the gospel, all that is just, and severe, and inflexible in the perfections of God, stands in threatening array against every son and daughter of the species. And if they will not look to God as he sets himself forth to us in the New Testament,—if they refuse to look unto him as God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses,—if they set aside all that is said about the blood of the everlasting covenant, and the new and living way of access, and the manner in which

the mediatorship of Christ hath repaired all the indignities of sin, and shed a glory over the truth and justice of the lawgiver, —if they will still persist in looking to him through another channel than that of his own revelation; he will persist in looking to them with the aspect of a stern and unappeased enemy. He will not let down the honours of his inflexible character, for the sake of those who refuse his way of salvation. He will not fall in with the delusions of those who profess to revere this character, and then shake the whole burden of conscious guilt and infirmity away from them, by the presumption, that in some way or other, the mercy of God will interpose to defend them from the vengeance of his more severe and unrelenting perfections. The one and the only way, in which he dispenses mercy, is through the atonement of Christ,—and if your confidence be laid in any other quarter, he will put that confidence to shame. He will not accept the prayers of those, who can thus make free with the unchangeable attributes which belong to him. He will not descend with such to any intercourse of affection whatever. He will not own the approaches, nor will he deal out any boon from the storehouse of his grace, to those who profess a general confidence in his mercy—when, instead of a mercy which guards, and dignifies, and keeps entire the whole glory and character of God, it is a mercy which belies his word, which invades his other perfections, which spoils the divine image of its grandeur, which breaks up the whole fabric of his moral government, and would make the throne of heaven the seat of an unmeaning pageant, the throne of an insulted and degraded sovereign.

The religion of nature,—or the religion of unaided demonstration,—or the religion of our most fashionable and philosophical schools, leaves this question totally undisposed of;—and at the same time, till the question be resolved, all the hopes of the human soul are in a state of the most fearful uncertainty. This religion makes God the subject of its demonstrations, and it draws out a list of attributes, and it makes the justice of God to be one of these attributes, and the placability of God to be another of them, and it admits that it is in virtue of the former perfection of his nature, that he makes condemnation and

punishment to rest on the head of those who violate his law, and that it is in virtue of the latter perfection that he looks connivance, and extends pardon to such violations.

Now, the question which the disciples of this religion have never settled, is, how to strike the compromise between these attributes. They cannot dissipate the cloud of mystery, which hangs over the line of demarcation that is between them. They cannot tell in how far the justice of God will insist on its exactions and its claims, or what the extent of that disobedience is, over which the placability of God will spread the shelter of a generous forgiveness. There is a dilemma here, out of which they cannot unwarp themselves,—a question to which they can give no other answer, than the expressive answer of their silence,—and it is such a silence, as leaves our every apprehension unquelled, and the whole burden of our unappeased doubts and difficulties as insupportable as before. What we demand is, that they shall lay down the steady and unalterable position of that limit, at which the justice of God, and the placability of God, cease their respective encroachments on each other. If they cannot tell this, they can tell nothing that is of any consequence, either to the purpose of comfort, or of direction. The sinner wishes to know on which side of this unknown and undetermined limit, his degree of sinfulness is placed. He wishes to know whether his offences are such as come under the operation of justice, or of mercy,—whether the one attribute will exact from him the penalty, or the other will smile on him connivance. It is in vain to say, that if he repent and turn from them, mercy will claim him as her own, and recover him from the dominion of justice, and spread over all his sins the mantle of an everlasting oblivion. This may still be saying nothing,—for the work of repentance is a work, which, though he should be always trying, he always fails in; and in spite of his every exertion, there is a sin and a shortness in all his services. And when he casts his eye along the scale of character, he sees the better and the worse on each side of him; and the difficulty still recurs, how far down in the scale does mercy extend, or how far up on this scale does justice carry its fiery sentence of condemnation. And thus it is, that he feels no fixed

security, which he can lay hold of,—no solid ground on which he can lay the trust of his acceptance with God. And this religion, which has left the whole problem of the attributes undetermined, which can furnish the sinner with no light, by which he may be made to perceive how justice can be displayed, but at the expense of mercy, or how mercy can be displayed, but by breaking in upon the entireness of justice; this hollow, baseless, unsupported system, which, by mangling and deforming the whole aspect of the Deity, has virtually left man without God,—has also, by the faint and twilight obscurity, or rather by the midnight darkness in which it has involved the question about the point of sinfulness, at which the one attribute begins the exercise of its rigour, and the other ceases its indulgence, not only left man without God, but also left him without any solid hope in the world.

But, Secondly, the confidence we have been attempting to expose, is hostile to the cause of practical righteousness in the world.

For what is the real and experimental effect of the obscurity in question on the practice of mankind? The question about our interest with God, is felt to be unresolvable; and, under this feeling, no genuine attempt is made to resolve it. Man eases himself of the difficulty by putting it away from him; and, as he cannot find the point of gradation in the scale of character, on the one side of which, there lies acceptance with God, and on the other side of it, condemnation,—he just upholds himself in tranquillity at any one point, throughout every one variety of this gradation.

Let the question only be put, How far down, in the scale of character, may this loose system of confidence be carried? and where is the limit between those sins, to which forgiveness may be looked for, and those sins from which it is withheld? and you will seldom find the man who gives an answer against himself. The world, in fact, is so much the home and the resting-place of every natural man, that you will not get him so to press, and so to prosecute the question, as to come to any conclusion, that is at all likely to alarm him. He will not barter his present peace, for a concern that looks so distant to him

as that of his eternity. The question touches but lightly on his feelings, and an answer conceived lightly, and given lightly, will be enough to pacify him. Go to the man, whose decent and unexceptionable proprieties make him the admiration of all his acquaintances, and even he will allow that he has his infirmities; but he can smother all his apprehensions, and regale his fancy with the smile of an indulgent God. Take, now a descending step in the scale of character; and do you think there is not to be met with there, the very same process of conscious infirmity on the one hand, and of vague, general, and bewildering confidence on the other? Will the people of the lower station not do the very same thing with the people above them?—Compare themselves with themselves, and find equals to keep them in countenance, and share in the average respect that circulates around them, and take comfort in the review of their very fair and neighbourlike accomplishments, and with the allowance of being just such sinners as they are in the daily habit of associating with, get all their remorse, and all their gloomy anticipations disposed of, by throwing the whole burden of them, in a loose and general way, on the indulgence of God?

And where in the name of truth and of righteousness, will this stop? We can answer that question. It will not stop at all. It will describe the whole range of human character; and we challenge you to put your finger on that point where it is to terminate, or to find out the place where a barrier is to be raised, against the progress of this mischievous security. It will go downwards and downwards, till it come to the very verge of the malefactor's dungeon. Nay, it will enter there; and we doubt not that an enlightened discerner may witness, even in this receptacle of outcasts the operation of the very sentiment, which gives such peace and such buoyancy to him whose moral accomplishments throw around him the lustre of a superior estimation. But this lustre will not impose on the eye of God. The Discerner of the heart sees that one and all of us are alienated from him, and strangers to the obligation of his high and spiritual acquirements. He declares the name of Christ to be the only one given under heaven, whereby men can be

saved; and after this, every act of confidence, disowning his name, is an expression of the most insulting impiety. On the system of general confidence every man is left to sin just as much as he likes, and to take comfort just as much as his powers of delusion can administer to him. At this rate, the government of God is unhinged,—the whole earth is broken loose from the system of his administration,—he is deposed from his supremacy altogether,—peace, when there is no peace, spreads its deadly poison over the face of society,—and one sentiment of deep and fatal tranquility about the things of God, takes up its firm residence in a world, which, from one end to the other of it, sends up the cry of rebellion against him.

This is a sore evil. The want of a fixed and clearly perceptible line between the justice and placability of the divine nature, not only buries in utter darkness the question of our acceptance with God; but, by throwing every thing loose and undetermined, it opens up the range of a most lawless and uncontrolled impunity for the disobedience of man, up from its gentler deviations, and down to its most profligate and daring excesses. If there be no intelligible line to separate the exercise of the justice of God from the exercise of his placability, every individual will fix this line for himself; and he will make these two attributes to be yea and nay, or fast and loose with each other; and he will stretch out the placability, and he will press upon the justice, just as much as to accommodate the standard of his religious principles to the state of his religious practice; and he will make every thing to square with his own existing taste, and wishes, and convenience; and his mind will soon work its own way to a system of religious opinions which gives him no disturbance; and the spirit of a deep slumber will lay hold of his deluded conscience; and thus, from the want of a settled line,—from the vague, ambiguous, and indefinite way in which this matter is taken up, and brought to a very loose and general conclusion,—or, in other words, from that very way in which natural religion, whether among deists, or our more slender professors of Christianity, leaves the whole question, about the limit of the attributes, unentered upon,—will every man take comfort in the imagined tenderness of God, just as much

as he stands in need of it, and experiment on the patience of God just as far as his natural desires may carry him,—so that when we look to the men of the world, as they pass smoothly onward, from the cradle to the grave, do we see each of them in a state of profound security as to his interest with God; each of them solacing himself with his own conception about the slenderness of his guilt, and the kindness of an indulgent Deity; each of them in a state of false and fancied peace with Heaven, while every affection of the inner man, and many of the doings of the outer man, bear upon them the stamp of rebellion against Heaven's law; each of them walking without uneasiness, and without terror, while, at the same time, each and all of them do in fact walk in the counsel of their own hearts, and after the sight of their own eyes.

SERMON XVI.

THE UNION OF TRUTH AND MERCY IN THE GOSPEL.

PSALM LXXXV. 10.

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

It was not by a simple deed of amnesty, that man was invited to return and be at peace with God. It was by a deed of expiation. It was not by nullifying the sanctions of the law, that man was offered a free and a full discharge from the penalties he had incurred by breaking it. It was by executing these sanctions on another, who voluntarily took them upon himself, and who, in so doing, magnified the law, and made it honourable. To redeem us from the curse of the law, Christ became a curse for us. It was not by God lifting off our iniquities from our persons, and scattering them away into a region of forgetfulness, without one demonstration of his abhorrence, and without the fulfilment of his threatenings against them; but lifting them off from us, he laid them on another, who bare, in his own person, the punishment that we should have borne. God laid upon his own Son the iniquities of us all. The guilt of our sins is not done away by a mere act of forgiveness. It is washed away by the blood of the Lamb. God set him forth a propitiation. He was smitten for our transgressions. He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God. The system of the gospel no more expunges the attribute of mercy from the character of the Godhead, than it expunges the attributes of truth and righteousness. But all the mercy which it offers and proclaims to a guilty world, is the mercy which flows upon it

through the channel of that Mediatorship, by which his truth and his justice have been asserted and vindicated; and, while it reveals to us the openness of this channel, it also reveals to us that every other which the heart of man may conceive, is shut, and intercepted, and utterly impassable. There is none other name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved, but the name of him who poured out his soul unto the death for us. Without the shedding of his blood, there could have been no remission. And he who hath not the Son, hath the wrath of God abiding on him.

It is due to our want of moral sensibility, that sin looks so light and so trivial in our estimation. We have no adequate feeling of its malignity, of its exceeding sinfulness. And, liable as we are to think of God, that he is altogether like unto ourselves, do we think that he may cancel our guilt as easily from the book of his condemnation, by an act of forgiveness, as we cancel it from our own memory, by an act of forgetfulness. But God takes his own way, and most steadfastly asserts, throughout the whole process of our recovery, the prerogatives of his own truth, and his own righteousness. He so loved the world, as to send his Son to it, not to condemn, but to save. But he will not save us in such a way as to confirm our light estimation of sin, or to let down the worth and the dignity of his own character. The method of our salvation is not left to the random caprices of human thought, and human fancy. It is a method devised for us by unsearchable wisdom, and made known to us by fixed and unalterable truth, and prescribed to us by a supreme authority, which has debarred every other method; and though we may behold no one feature, either of greatness or of beauty to admire in it—yet do angels admire it; and to accomplish it, did the Son of God move from the residence of his glory; and all heaven appears to have laboured with the magnitude and the mystery of the great undertaking; and along the whole tract of revelation, from the first age of the world, do we behold the notices of the coming atonement; and while man sits at his ease, and can see nothing to move him either to gratitude or to wonder, in the evolution of that mighty scheme, by which mercy and truth have been made to meet together, and right-

eousness and peace to kiss each other,—it is striking to mark the place and the prominency which are given to it, in the councils of the Eternal. And it might serve to put us right, and to rebuke the levites which are so currently afloat in this dead and darkened world, did we only look at the stress that is laid on this great work, throughout the whole of its preparation and its performance,—and how to bring it to its accomplishment, the Father had to send the Son into the world, and to throw a veil over his glory,—and to put the cup of our chastisement into his hand,—and to bid the sword of righteous vengeance awake against his fellow,—and, that he might clear a way of access to a guilty world, had to do it through the blood of an everlasting covenant,—and to lay the full burden of our atonement on the head of the innocent sufferer,—and to endure the spectacle of his bitterness, and his agonies, and his tears, till he cried out that it was finished, and so bowed himself and gave up the ghost.

Man is blind to the necessity, but God sees it. The prayer of Christ in his agony was, that the cup, if possible, might be removed from him. But it was not possible. He could have called twelve legions of angels, and they would have eagerly flown to rescue their beloved Lord from the hands of his persecutors. But he knew that the scripture must be fulfilled, and they looked on in silent forbearance. It behooved him to undergo all this. And there was a need, and a propriety, why he should suffer all these things, ere he entered into his glory.

We shall offer three distinct remarks on this method of our redemption, in order to prove that it fulfils the whole assertion of our text, that it has made mercy and truth to meet together. and righteousness and peace to kiss each other.

First, it maintains the entireness and glory of all the attributes of the Godhead. Secondly, it provides a solid foundation for the peace of every sinner who concurs in it. And, thirdly, it strengthens all the securities for the cause of practical righteousness among men.

I. In darkness, as we are, about the glory and character of the Supreme Being, it would offer a violence even to our habitual conceptions of him, to admit of any limit, or any deduction

from the excellencies of his nature. We should even think it a lessening of the Deity, were the extent of his perfections such, as that we should be able to grasp them within the comprehension of our understandings. The property of chiefest admiration to his creatures is, that they know but a part, and are not aware how small a part that is, to what is unknown; and never is their obeisance more lowly, than when under the sense of a greatness that is undefined and unsearchable, they feel themselves baffled by the infinitude of the Creator. It is not his power as attested by all that exists within the limits of actual discovery; but his power, as conceived to form and uphold a universe, whose outskirts are unknown.—It is not his wisdom, as exhibited in what has been seen by human eye; but his wisdom, as pervading the unnumbered secrecies of a mechanism, which no eye can penetrate. It is not his knowledge, as displayed in the greater and prophetic outlines of the history of this world; but his knowledge, as embracing all the mazes of creation, and all the mighty periods of eternity.—It is not his antiquity, as prior to all that is visible, and as reaching far above and beyond the remote infancy of nature; but his antiquity, as retiring upwards from the loftiest ascent of our imaginations, and lost in the viewless depths of an existence, that was from everlasting.—These are what serve to throne the Deity in grandeur inaccessible. It is the thought of what eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, that places him on such a height of mystery before us. And should we ever be able to overtake, in thought, the dimensions of any attribute that belongs to him, —and far more should we ever be able to outstrip, in fancy, a single feature of that character which is realised by the living and reigning God,—should defect or impotency attach to him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, would we feel as if all our most rooted and accustomed conceptions of the Godhead had sustained an overthrow, would we feel as if the sanctuary of him who is the King eternal and invisible had suffered violence.

And this is just as true of the moral as of the natural attributes of the Godhead. When we think of his truth, it is a truth

which, if heaven and earth stand committed to the fulfilment of its minutest article, heaven and earth must, for its vindication, pass away. When we think of his holiness, it is such that, if sin offer to draw nigh, a devouring fire goeth forth to burn up and to destory it. When we think of his law, it is a law which must be made honourable, even though, by the enforcement of its sanctions, it shall sweep into an abyss of misery all the generations of the rebellious. And yet this God, just, and righteous, and true, is a God of love, and of compassion, infinite. He is slow to anger, and of great mercy. He does not afflict willingly; and as a father rejoices over his children, does he long to rejoice in tenderness over us all; and out of the storehouse of a grace that is inexhaustible, does he deal out the offers of pardon and reconciliation to every one of us. Even in some way or other does the love of God for his creatures find its way through the barrier of their sinfulness; and he who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,—he who hath spoken the word, and shall he not perform it,—he of whose law it has been said, that not one jot or one tittle of it, shall pass away, till all be fulfilled, he holds out the overtures of friendship to the children of disobedience, and invites the guiltiest among them to the light of his countenance, in time, and to the enjoyment of his glory and presence, in eternity.

There is no one device separate from the gospel, by which the glory of any one of these attributes can be exalted, but by the surrender or the limitation of another attribute. It is in the gospel alone that we perceive how each of them may be heightened to infinity, and yet each of them reflect a lustre on the rest. When Christ died, justice was magnified. When he bore the burden of our torment, the truth of God received its vindication. When the sins of the world brought him to the cross, the lesson taught by this impressive spectacle was, holiness unto the Lord. All the severer perfections of the Godhead, were, in fact, more powerfully illustrated by the deep and solemn propitiation that was made for sin, than they could have been by the direct punishment of sin itself,—Yet all redounding to the triumph of his mercy.—For mercy, in the exercise of a simple and spontaneous tenderness, does not make so high

an exhibition, as mercy forcing its way through restraints and difficulties,—as mercy accomplishing its purposes by a plan of unsearchable wisdom,—as mercy surrendering what was most dear for the attainment of its object,—as the mercy of God, not simply loving the world, but so loving it as to send his only beloved Son, and to lay upon him the iniquities of us all,—as mercy, thus surmounting a barrier which, to created eye, appeared immoveable, and which both pours a glory on the other excellencies of the Godhead, and rejoices over them.

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, which has poured the light of day into all the intricacies of this contemplation. We there see no compromise, and no surrender, of the attributes to each other. We see no mutual encroachment on their respective provinces,—no letting down of that entire and absolute perfection which belongs to every part in the character of the Godhead. The justice of God has not been invaded; for by him, who poured out his soul unto the death for us, has the whole weight of this aggrieved and offended attribute been borne; and from that cross of agony, where he cried out that it was finished, does the divine Justice send forth a brighter and a nobler radiance of vindicated majesty, than if the minister of vengeance had gone forth, and wreaked the whole sentence of condemnation on every son and daughter of the species. And as the justice of God has suffered no encroachment, so, such is the admirable skilfulness of this expedient, that the mercy of God is restrained by no limitation. It is arrested in its offers by no questions about the shades, and the degrees, and the varieties of sinfulness. It stops at no point in the descending scale of human depravity. The blood of Christ cleansing from all sin, has spread such a field for its invitations, that in the full confidence of a warranted and universal commission, may the messengers of grace walk over the face of the world, and lay the free gift of acceptance at the door of every individual, and of every family. Such is the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; and yet it is a mercy so exercised, as to keep the whole council and character of God unbroken,—and a mercy, from the display of

which, there beams a brighter radiance than ever from each lineament in the image of the Godhead.

Now, if the glory of God be so involved in this way of redemption, what shall we think of the disparagement, that is rendered to him, and to all his attributes, by the man who, without respect to the work and the righteousness of Christ, seeks to be justified by his own righteousness? It is quite possible for man to toil and to waste his strength on the object of his salvation, and yet, by all he can make out, may be only widening his laborious deviation from the path which leads to it. Do his uttermost to establish a righteousness of his own, and what is the whole fruit of his exertion?—the mere semblance of righteousness, without the infusion of its essential quality,—labour without love,—the drudgery of the hand, without the desire and devotedness of the heart, as its inspiring principle. If the man be dissatisfied, as he certainly ought to be, then a sense of unexpiated guilt will ever and anon intrude itself upon his fears; and a resistless conviction of the insufficiency of all his performances will never cease to haunt and to paralyze him. In these circumstances, there may be the conformity of the letter extorted from him, in the spirit of bondage; but the animating soul is not there, which turns obedience into a service of delight and a service of affection. In Heaven's account, such obedience as this is but the mockery of a lifeless skeleton; and, even as a skeleton, it is both wanting in its parts, and unshapely in its proportions. It is an obedience defective, even in the tale and measure of its external duties. But what pervades the whole of it by the element of worthlessness is, that, destitute of love to God, it is utterly destitute of a celestial character, and can never prepare an inhabitant of this world for the joys or the services of the great celestial family.

And, on the other hand, if the man be satisfied, this very circumstance gives to the righteousness that he would establish for himself, the character of an insult upon God, instead of a reverential offering. It is a righteousness accompanied with a certain measure of confident feeling, that it is good enough for the acceptance of the Lawgiver. There is in it the audacity of a claim and a challenge upon his approbation. Short as it

is, in respect of outward performance, and tainted within by the very spirit of earthliness, it is brought like a lame and diseased victim in sacrifice, and laid upon the altar before him. It is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God; but it is a still more direct outrage upon his attributes, to expect that he will look on sinfulness with complacency. It is an open defiance to the law, to trample upon its requirements; but it were a still deadlier overthrow of its authority, to reverse its sanctions, and make it turn its threatenings into rewards. The sinner who disobeys and trembles, renders at least the homage of his fears to the truth and power of the Eternal. But the sinner who makes a righteousness of his infirmities, and puts a gloss upon his disobedience, and brings the accursed thing to the gate of the sanctuary, and bids the piercing eye of Omniscience look upon it, and be satisfied,—tell us whether the fire which cometh forth will burn up the offering, that it may rise in sweetly smelling savour to him who sitteth on the throne; or will it seize on the presumptuous offerer, who could thus dare the inspection, and thrust his unprepared footstep within the precincts of unspotted holiness?

And how must it go to aggravate the offence of such an approach, when it is made in the face of another righteousness which God himself hath provided, and in which alone he hath proclaimed, that it is safe for a sinner to draw nigh. When the alternative is fairly proposed, to come on the merit of your own obedience and tried by it, or to come on the merit of the obedience of Christ, and receive in your own person the reward which he hath purchased for you,—only think of the aspect it must bear in the eye of Heaven, when the offer of the perfect righteousness is contemptuously set aside, and the sinner chooses to appear in his own character before the presence of the Eternal. When the imputation of vanity and uselessness is thus fastened on all that the Son hath done, and on all that the Father hath devised, for the redemption of the guilty,—when that righteousness, to accomplish which Christ had to travail in the greatness of his strength, is thus held to be nothing, by creatures whose every thought, and every performance, have the stain of corruption in them—when that doctrine of his

death, on which, in the book of God's counsel, is made to turn the deliverance of our world, is counted to be foolishness,—when the sinner thus persists in obtruding his own virtue on the notice of the Lawgiver, and refuses to put on, as a covering of defence, the virtue of his Saviour,—we have only to contrast the lean shrivelled paltry dimensions of the one, with the faultless, and sustained, and Godlike perfection of the other, to perceive how desperate is the folly, and how unescapeable is the doom, of him who hath neglected the great salvation.

It is thus that the refusal of Christ, as our righteousness, stamps a deeper and a more atrocious character of rebellion on the guilty than before,—and it is thus that the word of his mouth, like a two-edged sword, performs one function on him who accepts, and an opposite function on him who despises it. If the gospel be not the savour of life unto life, it will be the savour of death unto death. If it be not a rock of confidence, it will be a rock of offence, and it will fall upon him who resists it, and grind him into powder. If we kiss not the Son, in the day of our peace, the day of his wrath is coming, and who shall be able to stand when his anger is kindled but a little? We have already offended God, by the sinfulness of our practice;—we may yet offend him still more, by the haughtiness of our pretensions. The evil of our best works constitutes them an abomination in his sight; but nothing remains to avert the hostility of his truth and his holiness against us, if by those works we seek to be justified. It will indeed be the sealing up of our iniquity, if our obedience, impregnated as it is with the very spirit of that iniquity, shall be set up in rivalship to the obedience of his only and well beloved Son,—if, by viewing the defect of our righteousness, as a thing of indifference, and the fulness of his, as a thing of no value, we shall heap insult upon transgression,—and if, after the provocation of a broken law, we shall maintain the boastful attitude of him who hath won the merit and the reward of victory, and in this attitude add the further provocation of a slighted and rejected gospel.

II. We shall conclude, for the present, these brief and imperfect remarks, by adverting to the solidity of that foundation of peace, which the gospel scheme of mercy provides for every

sinner who concurs in it. It is altogether worthy of observation, how, under this exquisite contrivance, the very elements of disquietude, in a sinner's bosom, are turned into the elements of comfort and confidence, in the mind of a believer. It is the unswerving truth of God, which haunts the former by the thought of the certainty of his coming vengeance. But this very truth, committed to the fulfilment of all those promises, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, sustains the latter by the thought of the certainty of his coming salvation. It is justice, unbending justice, which sets such a seal on the condemnation of the disobedient, that every sinner who is out of Christ, feels it to be irrevocable. In Christ, this attribute, instead of a terror, becomes a security; for it is just in God to justify him who believes in Jesus. It is the sense of God's violated authority, which fills the heart of an awakened sinner with the fear that he is undone. But this authority under the gospel proclamation, is leagued on the side of comfort, and not of fear; for this is the commandment of God, that we believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as he has given us commandment. It is not by an act of mercy, triumphing over the other attributes, that pardon is extended to the sinful; for, under the economy of the gospel, these attributes are all engaged on the side of mercy; and God is not only merciful, but he is faithful and just in forgiving the sins of those who accept of Christ, as he is offered to them in the gospel. Those very perfections, then, which fix and necessitate the doom of the rebellious, form into a canopy of defence around the head of the believer. The guarantees of a sinner's punishment now become the guarantees of promise; and while, like the flaming sword at the gate of paradise, they turn every way, and shut him out of every access to the Deity but one,—let him take to that one, and they instantly become to him the sureties and the safe-guard of that hiding-place into which he has entered.

The foundation, then, of a believer's peace, is, in every way, as sure and as solid as is the foundation of a sinner's fears. The very truth which makes the one tremble, because staked to the execution of an unfulfilled threat, ministers to the other the strongest consolation. It is impossible for God to lie, says

an awkened sinner, and this thought pursues him with the agony of an arrow sticking fast. It is impossible for God to lie, says a believer; and as he hath not only said but sworn, there are two immutable things by which to anchor the confidence of him, who hath fled for refuge to the hope set before him. He staggers not at the promises of God, because of unbelief. He holds himself steadfast, by simply counting him to be faithful who hath promised. It is through that very faith, by being strong in which he gives glory to God, that he gains peace to his own heart; and the justice which beams a terror on all who stand without, utterly passes by the shielded head of him, who hath turned to the strong hold, and taken a place under the shadow of his wings, who hath satisfied the justice of God, and taken upon himself the burden of its fullest vindication.

SERMON XVII.

THE PURIFYING INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

ACTS XXVI. 18.

"Sanctified by faith."

III. IT is a matter of direct and obvious understanding, how the law, by its promises and its threatenings, should exert an influence over human conduct. We seem to walk in a plain path, when we pass onwards from the enforcements of the law, to the effect of them on the fears, and the hopes, and the purposes of man. Do this, and you shall live; and do the opposite of this, and you shall forfeit life, form two clear and distinct processes, in the conceiving of which, there is no difficulty whatever. The motive and the movement both stand intelligibly out to the discernment of common sense; nor in the application of such argument as this, to the design of operating on the character or life of a human being, is there any mystery to embarrass, any hidden step, which, by baffling our every attempt to seize upon it, leaves us in a state of helpless perplexity.

The same is not true of the gospel, or of the manner in which it operates on the springs of human action. It is not so readily seen, how its privileges can be appropriated by faith, and at the same time its precepts can retain their practical authority over the conduct of a believer. There is an alarm, and an honest alarm, on the part of many, lest a proclamation of free grace unto the world, should undermine all our securities for the cause of righteousness in the world. They look with jealousy upon the freeness. They fear lest a deed so ample and unconditional, of forgiveness for the past, should give rise, in the heart of a

sinner, to a secure opinion of its impunity for the future. What they dread is, that to proclaim such a freeness of pardon on the part of God, would be to proclaim a corresponding freeness of practice on the part of man. They are able to comprehend how the law, by its direct enforcements, should operate in keeping men from sin; but they are not able to comprehend how, when not under the law, but under grace, there should continue the same motives to abstain from sin, as those intelligible ones which the law furnishes, or even other motives, of more powerful operation. We are quite sure, that there is something here which needs to be made plain to the understandings of a very numerous class of inquirers,—a knot of difficulty which needs to be untied,—a hidden step in the process of explanation, on which they may firmly pass from what is known to what is unknown. There are not two terms, in the whole compass of human language, which stand more frequently and more familiarly contrasted with each other, than those of faith and good works; and this, not merely on the question of our acceptance before God, but also on the question of the personal character and acquirements of a true disciple of Christ. It is positively not seen, how the possession of the one should at all stimulate to the performance of the other,—how the peace of the gospel should reside in the same heart, from which there emanates, on the life of a believer, the practice of the gospel,—how a righteousness that is without the deeds of the law, should stand connected, in the actual history of him who obtains it, with a zealous, and diligent, and every-day doing of these deeds.

There is much in all this, to puzzle the man who is experimentally a stranger to the truth as it is in Jesus. Nor does it at all serve to extricate or to enlighten him, when he is made to perceive, that, in point of fact, those men who most cordially assent to the doctrine of salvation being all of grace and not of works, are most assiduous in so walking, and in so working, and in so painstaking, as if salvation were all of works, and not of grace. The fact is quite obvious and unquestionable. But the principle on which it rests, remains a mystery to the general eye of the world. They marvel, but they go no farther. They see that thus it is, but they see not how it is; and they

put it down among those inexplicable oddities which do at times occur, both in the moral and natural kingdom of the creation.

But in all our attempts to dissipate this obscurity, it is well to advert to the total difference between him who has the faith, and him who has it not. The one has the materials of the argument under his eye, and within the grasp of his handling. The other may be able to recognize in the argument, a logical and consistent process; but he is at a loss about the simple conceptions, which form the materials of the argument. He is like a man who can perform all the manipulations of an algebraical process, while he feels not the force or the significancy of the symbols. His habits of ratiocination enable him to perceive, that there is a connexion between the ideas in the argument. But the ideas themselves are not manifest to him. It is not in the power of reasoning to supply this want. Reasoning cannot create the primary materials of the argument. It only cements them together. And here it is, that you are met by the impotency of human demonstration,—and are reduced to the attitude of knocking at a door which you cannot open,—and feel your need of an enlightening spirit,—and are made to perceive, that it is only on the threshold of Christianity, where you can hold the intercourse of a common sympathy and understanding with the world,—and that to be admitted to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, you must pass into a region of manifestation, where the world cannot follow, but where it will cast the imputation of madness, and of mysticism after you.

Without attempting to define faith, as to the nature of it, which could not be done but with other words more simple than itself, let us look to the objects of faith, and see whether there do not emanate from them, a sanctifying influence on the heart of every real believer.

First, then, the whole object of faith, is the matter of the testimony of God in Scripture. So that though faith be a single principle, and is designated in language by a single term,—yet this by no means precludes it from being such a principle, as comes into contact, and is conversant, with a very great variety of objects. In this respect it may bear a resemblance to sight,

or hearing, or any other of the senses, by which man holds communication with the external things that are near him, and around him. The same eye which, when open, looks to a friend, and can, from that very look, afford entrance into the heart for an emotion of tenderness, will also behold other visible things, and take in an appropriate influence from each of them,—will behold the prospect of beauty that is before it, and thence obtain gratification to the taste,—or will behold the sportive felicity of animals, and thence obtain gratification to the benevolence,—or will behold the precipice beneath, and thence obtain a warning of danger, or a direction of safety,—or may behold a thousand different objects, and obtain a thousand different feelings and different intimations.

Now the same of faith. It has been called the eye of the mind. But whether this be a well conceived image or not, it certainly affords an inlet to the mind for a great variety of communications. The Apostle calls faith the evidence of things not seen,—not of one such thing, but of very many such things. The man who possesses faith, can be no more intellectually blind to one of these things, and at the same time knowing and believing as to another of them, than the man who possesses sight can, with his eye open, perceive one external object, and have no perception of another, which stands as nearly and as conspicuously before him. The man who is destitute of sight, will never know what it is to feel the charm of visible scenery. But grant him sight; and he will not only be made alive to this charm, but to a multitude of other influences, all emanating from the various objects of visible nature, through the eye upon the mind, and against which his blindness had before opposed a hopeless and invincible barrier. And the man who is destitute of faith, will never know what it is to feel the charm of the peace-speaking blood of Christ. But grant him faith; and he will not only be made alive to this charm, but to a multitude of other influences, all emanating from the various truths of revelation, through this intellectual organ, on the heart of him who was at one time blind, but has now been made to see. This will help, in some measure, to clear up the perplexity to which we have just now adverted. They who are under its

darkening influence, conceive of the faith which worketh peace, that it has only to do with one doctrine, and that that one doctrine relates to Christ, as a peace-offering for sin. Now, it is very true, that it has to do with this one doctrine; but it has also to do with other doctrines, all equally presented before it in the very same record, and the view of all which is equally to be had, from the very same quarter of contemplation. In other words, the very same opening of the mental eye, through which the peace of the gospel finds entrance into the bosom of a faithful man, affords an entrance for the righteousness of the gospel along with it. The truth that Christ died for the sins of the world, will cast upon his mind its appropriate influence. But so also will the truth that Christ is to judge the world, and the truth that unless ye repent ye shall perish, and the truth that they who have a right to the tree of life, are they who keep the commandments, and the truth that an unrighteous man shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If a man see not every one object that is placed within the sphere of his natural vision, he sees none of them, and his whole body is full of darkness. If a man believe the Bible to be the word of God, he will read it; but if he read it, and believe not every one truth that lies within the grasp of his understanding, he believes none of them, and is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he is going.

If I open the door of my mind to the word of God, I as effectually make it the repository of various truths, as, if I open the door of my chamber, and take in the Bible, I make this chamber the repository of the book, and of every chapter, and of every verse, that is contained in it. I thus bring my mind into contact with every one influence, that every one truth is fitted to exercise over it. If there be nothing in these truths contradictory to each other, (and if there be, let this set aside, as it ought, the authority of the whole communication,) then the mind acts a right and consistent part in believing each of them, and in submitting itself to the influence of each of them. And thus it is, that believing the propitiation which is through the blood of Christ, for the remission of sins that are past, I may feel through him the peace of reconciliation with the Father;

and believing that he who cometh unto Christ for forgiveness must forsake all, I may also feel the necessity which lies upon me of departing from all iniquity; and believing that in myself there is no strength, for the accomplishment of such a task, I may look around for other expedients, than such as can be devised by my own natural wisdom, or carried into effect by my own natural energies; and believing that, in the hand of Christ there are gifts for the rebellious, and that one of these gifts is the Holy Spirit to strengthen his disciples, I may look to him for my sanctification, even as I look unto him for my redemption: and believing that the gift is truly promised as an answer to prayer, I may mingle a habit of prayer, with a habit of watchfulness and of endeavour. And thus may I go abroad over the whole territory of divine truth, and turn to its legitimate account every separate portion of it, and be in all a trusting, and a working and a praying, and a rejoicing, and a trembling disciple,—and that, not because I have given myself up to the guidance of clashing and contradictory principles,—but because, with a faith commensurate to the testimony of God, I give myself over in my whole mind, and whole person, to the authority of a whole Bible.

But secondly, let us take what some may think a more restricted view of the object of faith, and suppose it to be Jesus Christ in his person and in his character. It is a summary, but at the same time, a most true and substantial affirmation, that we are saved by faith in Christ. And yet this very affirmation, true as it is, may have been so misunderstood as to darken the minds of many, into the very misconception that we are attempting to expose. I could not be said to have faith in an acquaintance, if I believed not all that he told me. Nor have I faith in Christ, if I believe not every item of that communication of which he is the author, either by himself or by his messengers. So that faith in Christ, so far from excluding any of the truths of the Bible, comprehends our assent to them all. But we are willing to admit, that the phrase is calculated to fasten our attention more particularly on such truth as relates, in a more immediate manner, to the person and the doings of the Saviour. Take it in this sense, and you will find, that though

eminently and directly fitted to work peace in the heart of a believer, it is just as directly and as powerfully on the side of his practical righteousness. When I think of Christ, and think of him as one who has poured out his soul unto the death for me, I feel a confidence in drawing near unto God. When employed in this contemplation, I look to him as a crucified Saviour. But without keeping mine eye for a single moment from off his person,—without another exercise of mind, than that by which I look unto Jesus, simply and entirely, as he is set forth unto me,—I also behold him at one time as an exalted Saviour, and at another time as a commanding Saviour, and at another time as a strengthening Saviour. In other words, by the mere work of faith in Christ, I bring my heart into contact with all those motives, and all those elements of influence, which give rise to the new obedience of the gospel. When the veil betwixt me and the Saviour is withdrawn,—when God shines in my heart with the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of his Son,—when the Spirit taketh of the things of Christ, and showeth them unto me, and I am asked which of the things it is that is most fitted to arrest a convicted sinner, in the midst of his cries and prayers for deliverance,—I would say, that it was Christ lifted up on the cross for his offences, and pouring out the blood of that mighty expiation, by which the guilt of them all is washed away. This is the rock on which he will build all his hopes of acceptance before God. He will look unto Christ, and be at peace. But this is not the only attitude in which Christ is revealed to him. He will look to Christ as an example. He will look to him as a teacher. He will look to him in all the capacities which are attached to the person, or identified with the doings of the Saviour. He will look to him, asserting his right of authority and disposal over those whom he has purchased unto himself. He will, by the eye of faith, see that rebuking glance which our Saviour cast over the misconduct of his disciples,—and which, when Peter saw, by the eye of sight, he was so moved by the spectacle, that he went out and wept bitterly. That meekness and gentleness of Christ in the name of which, Paul besought his disciples to walk no more after the flesh, will be present in its influence on those who,

though they see him not, yet believe him, and have their conceptions filled and satisfied with his likeness. They will behold him to be an exalted Prince, as well as an exalted Saviour, and they will count it a faithful saying, that he came to sanctify as well as redeem,—and they will look upwards to his present might as a commander as well as forwards to his future majesty as a judge,—and they will be thoroughly persuaded, that to persevere in sin, is altogether to thwart the great aim of the enterprize of our redemption,—and they will understand, as Paul did, who affirmed, with expostulations and tears, that the enemies of righteousness are also the enemies of the cross; —and thus, from Christ, in all his various attitudes, will a moralizing power descend on the hearts of those who really believe in him,—and as surely as any man possesses the faith that is in Christ Jesus, so surely will he be sanctified by that faith.

And, thirdly, let us confine our attention still farther, to one particular article of our faith. Paul was determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Now, conceive faith to attach itself to the latter clause of this verse, and that Christ crucified, for the time being, is the single object of its contemplation. There is still no such thing as a true faith, attaching itself to this one object exclusively; and though at one time it may be the sole contemplation which engrosses it, at other times it may have other contemplations. If, in fact, it shut out those other contemplations, which are furnished by the subject-matter of the testimony of God, it may be proved now, and it will be proved in the day of reckoning, to be no faith at all. But just as it has been said, that the mind can only think of one thing at a time, so faith may be employed, for a time, in looking only towards one object; and as we said before, let Christ crucified be conceived to be that one object. From what has been said already, it will be seen, that this one exercise of faith will not counteract the legitimate effect of the other exercises. But we should like to compute the influence of this one exercise on the heart and life of a believer. In the case of an Antinomian, the doctrine of the atonement may furnish a pretext and a pacification to his conscience, under a wilful habit of perseverance in iniquity. But, if this partial faith of his be

not a real faith, then we are not responsible for his conduct, nor ought he to be at all quoted as an exception against that alliance, for which we are contending, between the faith of the gospel and the cause of practical righteousness. Only grant the faith to be real, and as there is no one doctrine of the Bible, out of which it may not gather a purifying influence to the heart, so out of this doctrine of the atonement, will such a purifying influence descend most abundantly on the heart of every genuine believer.

For, it first takes away a wall of partition, which, in the case of every man who has not received this doctrine, lies across the path of his obedience at the very commencement. So long as I think that it is quite impossible for me so to run as to obtain, I will not move a single footstep. Under the burden of a hopeless controversy between me and God, I feel as it were weighed down to the inactivity of despair. I live without hope; and so long as I do so, I live without God in the world. And besides, he, while the object of my terror, is also the object of my aversion. The helpless necessity under which I labour, so long as the question of my guilt remains unsettled is to dread the Being whom I am commanded to love. I may occasionally cast a feeble regard towards that distant and inaccessible Lawgiver: But so long as I view him shrouded in the darkness of frowning majesty, I can place in him no trust, and I can bear towards him no filial tenderness, I may occasionally consult the requirements of his law: But when I look to the uncancelled sentence that is against me, I can never tread, with hopeful or assured footsteps, on the career of obedience. But let me look unto Christ lifted up for our offences, and see the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, and which was contrary unto us, nailed to his cross, and there blotted out, and taken out of the way; and then I see the barrier in question levelled with the ground. I now behold the way of repentance cleared of the obstructions, by which it was aforetime rendered utterly impassable. This is the will of God,—even your sanctification, may be sounded a thousand times in the ear of an unbeliever, and leave him as immoveable as it found him; because, while under a sense of unexpiated guilt, he sees a mighty parapet

before him, which he cannot scale. But if the same words be sounded in the ears of a believer, they will put him into motion. For to him the parapet is opened up, and the rough way is made smooth, and the mountain and the hill are brought low, and the valley of separation is filled, and he is made to see the salvation of God. The path of obedience is made level before him, and he enters it with the inspiration of a new and invigorating principle; and that love to God, which the consciousness of guilt will ever keep at a distance from the heart, now takes up the room of this terrifying, and paralysing, and alienating sentiment, and the reception of this doctrine of atonement is just as much the turning point of a new character, as it is the turning point of a new hope; and it is the very point, in the history of every human soul, at which the alacrity of gospel obedience takes its commencement, as well as the cheerfulness of gospel anticipations. Till this doctrine be believed, there is no attempt at obedience at all; or else, it is such an obedience as is totally unanimated by the life and the love of real godliness. And it is not till this doctrine has taken possession of the mind, that any man can take up the language of the Psalmist, and say, "Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds."

Conceive, then, a believer with the career of obedience thus opened up and made hopeful to him,—conceive him with the necessity of obedience made just as authentically known to him as are the tidings of his deliverance from guilt,—conceive a man who, by the act of rendering homage to the truth of God, rests a confidence in the death of Christ for pardon, and who also, by the very same act, subscribes to the sayings of Christ about repentance, and the new walk of the new creature,—and then let me ask you to think of the securities which encompass his mind, and protect it from the delusion that we have already alluded to. We have said that the peace which is felt in a vague apprehension of God's mercy, and which makes no account of his truth, or of his justice, has the effect of making him who entertains it altogether stationary, in point of acquirement. With the semblance of good that he has about him, he will meet the sterner attributes of the Deity. For his defect of real good,

he will draw on the indulgent attributes of the Deity. He will make the character of God, suit itself to his own character, so that any stimulus to advance or to perfect it, shall be practically done away. And thus it is, that along the whole range of human accomplishment, you may observe an unvaried state of repose,—the repose, in fact, of death,—for the repose of man who brought to the estimate of a spiritual law, will be found, to use the significant language of the Bible, dead in trespasses and sins,—sinning at one time without remorse, trusting at another time without foundation.

Now the gospel scheme of mercy is clear of this abuse altogether. It comes forth upon the sinner with an antidote against this security, just as strong and as prominent as is its antidote against despair. Insomuch that the state of the believer, in respect of motive and of practical influence, is the very reverse of what we have now adverted to. In the act of becoming a believer, he awakens from the deep and the universal lethargy of nature. With his new hope commences his new life. He ceases to be stationary,—and what is more, he never ceases to be progressive. He does not satisfy himself with barely moving onwards to a higher point in the scale of human attainment, and then sitting down with the sentiment that it is enough. He never counts it enough. The practical attitude of the believer is that of one who is ever looking forwards. The practical movement of the believer is that of one who is ever pressing forwards. He could not, without a surrender of those essential principles which make him what he is, tarry at any one point in the gradation of moral excellence. It is not more inseparable from him to be ever doing well, than it is inseparable from him to be ever aspiring to do better. So that the paltry question about the degrees and the comparisons of virtue, he entertains not for a moment; and, with all the aids and expedients of the gospel for helping his advancement, does he strenuously prosecute the work of conforming to the precept of the gospel,—to be growing in grace, to be perfecting himself in holiness.

It has been a much controverted question, how far this process of continual advancement will carry a believer in this

world. Some affirm it will carry him to the point of absolute perfection. Others more cautiously satisfy themselves by the remark, that whether perfection be ever our attainment or not, it ought always to be our aim. And one thing seems to be certain,—that there is no such perfection in this world, as might bring along with it the repose of victory.

Paul counted all that was behind as nothing, and he pressed onwards. And it is the experience of every Christian, who makes a real business of his sanctification, that there is a struggle between nature and grace, even unto the end. There is no discharge from this warfare, while we are in the body. To the last hour of life there will be the presence of a carnal nature to humble him, and to make him vigilant; and, with every true Christian, there will be the ascendency of grace, so as that this nature shall not have the dominion over him. The corruption of the old man will be effectually resisted; but not, we fear, till the materialism of our actual frames be resolved into dust, will this corruption be destroyed. The flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, is the short but compendious description of the state of every believer in the world;—and could the evil and adverse principle be eradicated, as well as overborne,—could a living man bid the sinful propensity, with all its workings and all its inclinations, conclusively away from him,—could the authority of the new creature obtain such unrivalled sway over the whole machinery of the affections and the doings, that resistance was no longer felt, and the battle was brought to its termination,—if it were possible, we say, for a disciple, on this side of the grave, to attain the eminency of a condition so glorious, then we know not of what use to him would be either a death or a resurrection, or why he might not bear his earthly tabernacle to heaven, and set him down by direct translation amongst the company of the celestial. But no! There hangs about the person of the most pure and perfect Christian upon earth, some mysterious necessity of dying. That body, styled with such emphasis a vile body, by the Apostle, must be pulverized and made over again. And not till that which is sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption,—not till that which is sown in weakness shall be

raised in power,—not till that which is sown a natural body shall be raised a spiritual body,—not till the soul of man occupy another tenement, and the body which now holds him be made to undergo some unknown but glorious transformation, will he know what it is to walk at perfect liberty, and, with the full play of his then emancipated powers, to expatiate without frailty, and without a flaw, in the service of his God.

We know that the impression which many have of the disciples of the gospel is, that their great and perpetual aim is, that they may be justified,—that the change of state which they are ever aspiring after, is a change in their forensic state, and not in their personal,—that if they can only attain delivery from wrath, they will be satisfied,—and that the only use they make of Christ, is, through his means, to obtain an erasure of the sentence of their condemnation. Now, though this, undoubtedly, be one great design of the gospel, it is not the design in which it terminates. It may, in fact, be only considered as a preparation for an ulterior accomplishment altogether. Christ came to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. It were selfishness under the guise of sacredness, to sit down, in placid contentment, with the single privilege of justification. It is only the introduction to higher privileges.

But not till we submit to the righteousness of Christ, as the alone meritorious plea of our acceptance, shall we become personally righteous ourselves,—not till we see the blended love and holiness of the Godhead, in our propitiation, shall we know how to combine a confidence in his mercy, with a reverence for his character,—not till we look to that great transaction, by which the purity of the divine nature is vindicated, and yet the sinner is delivered from the coming vengeance, shall we be freed from the dominion of sin, or be led to admire and to imitate the great Pattern of excellence. The renewing Spirit, indeed, is withheld from all those who withhold their consent from the doctrine of Christ, and of him crucified. Paul was determined to know nothing else; and it is in this knowledge, and in this alone, that we are renewed after the image of him who created us.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.....Amen.

PREFACE

TO DISCOURSES ON THE APPLICATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE COMMERCIAL AND ORDINARY AFFAIRS OF LIFE.

THE following discourses can be regarded in no other light, than as the fragment of a subject far too extensive to be overtaken within a compass so narrow. There has only a partial survey been taken of the morality of the actions that are current among people engaged in merchandise: and with regard to the morality of the affections which stir in their hearts, and give a feverish and diseased activity to the pursuits of worldly ambition, this has scarcely been touched upon, save in a very general way in the concluding discourse.

And yet, in the estimation of every cultivated Christian, this second branch of the subject should be by far the most interesting,—as it relates to that spiritual discipline by which the love of the world is overcome; and by which all that oppressive anxiety is kept in check, which the reverses and uncertainties of business are so apt to inject into the bosom; and by which the appetite that urges him who hasteth to be rich is effectually restrained—so as to make it possible for a man to give his hand to the duties of his secular occupation, and, at the same time, to maintain that sacredness of heart which becomes every fleeting traveller through a scene, all whose pleasures and whose prospects are so soon to pass away.

Should this part of the subject be resumed at some future opportunity, there are two questions of casuistry connected with it, which will demand no small degree of consideration. The first relates to the degree in which an affection for present things, and present interests ought to be indulged. And the second is, whether, on the supposition that a desire after the good things of the present life were reduced down to the standard of

the gospel, there would remain a sufficient impulse in the world for upholding its commerce, at the rate which would secure the greatest amount of comfort and subsistence to its families.

Without offering any demonstration, at present, upon this matter, we simply state it as our opinion, that, though the whole business of the world were in the hands of men thoroughly Christianised, and who, rating wealth according to its real dimensions on the high scale of eternity, were chastened out of all their idolatrous regards to it—yet would trade, in these circumstances, be carried to the extreme limit of its being really productive or desirable. An affection for riches, beyond what Christianity prescribes, is not essential to any extension of commerce that is at all valuable or ligitimate; and in opposition to the maxim, that the spirit of enterprise is the soul of commercial prosperity, do we hold, that it is the excess of this spirit beyond the moderation of the New Testament, which, pressing on the natural boundaries of trade, is sure, at length, to visit every country, where it operates with the recoil of all those calamities, which in the shape of beggared capitalists, and unemployed operatives, and dreary intervals of bankruptcy and alarm, are observed to follow a season of overdone speculation.

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DISCOURSE I.

ON THE MERCANTILE VIRTUES WHICH MAY EXIST WITHOUT THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 8.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

The Apostle, in these verses, makes use of certain terms without ever once proposing to advance any definition of their meaning. He presumes on a common understanding of this, between himself and the people whom he is addressing. He presumes that they know what is signified by Truth, and Justice, and Loveliness, and the other moral qualities which are included in the enumeration of our text. They, in fact, had words to express them, for many ages antecedent to the coming of Christianity into the world. Now, the very existence of the words proves, that, before the gospel was taught, the realities which they express must have existed also. These good and respectable attributes of character must have been occasionally exemplified by men, prior to the religion of the New Testament. The virtuous and the praiseworthy must, ere the commencement of the new dispensation, have been met with in society —for the Apostle does not take them up in this passage, as if they were unknown and unheard of novelties—but such objects of general recognition, as could be understood on the bare mention of them, without warning and without explanation.

But more than this. These virtues must not only have been exemplified by men, previous to the entrance of the gospel

amongst them—seeing that the terms, expressive of the virtues, were perfectly understood—but men must have known how to love and to admire them. How is it that we apply the epithet lovely to any moral qualification, but only in as far as that qualification does in fact draw towards it a sentiment of love? How is it that another qualification is said to be of good report, but in as far as it has received from men an applauding or an honourable testimony? The Apostle does not bid his readers have respect to such things as are lovely, and then, for the purpose of saving them from error, enumerate what the things are which he conceives to possess this qualification. He commits the matter, with perfect confidence, to their own sense and their own apprehension. He bids them bear a respect to whatsoever things are lovely—nor does he seem at all suspicious that, by so doing, he leaves them in any darkness or uncertainty about the precise import of the advice which he is delivering. He therefore recognizes the competency of men to estimate the lovely and the honourable of character. He appeals to a tribunal in their own breasts, and evidently supposes, that, antecedently to the light of the Christian revelation, there lay scattered among the species certain principles of feeling and of action, in virtue of which, they both occasionally exhibited what was just and true, and of good report, and also could render to such an exhibition, the homage of their regard and of their reverence. At present we shall postpone the direct enforcement of these virtues upon the observation of Christians, and shall confine our thoughts of them to the object of estimating their precise importance and character, when they are realized by those who are not Christians.

While we assert with zeal every doctrine of Christianity, let us not forget that there is a zeal without discrimination; and that, to bring such a spirit to the defence of our faith, or of any one of its peculiarities, is not to vindicate the cause, but to discredit it. Now, there is a way of maintaining the utter depravity of our nature, and of doing it in such a style of sweeping and of vehement asseveration, as to render it not merely obnoxious to the taste, but obnoxious to the understanding. On this subject there is often a roundness and a temerity of announcement,

which any intelligent man, looking at the phenomena of human character with his own eyes, cannot go along with; and thus it is, that there are injudicious defenders of orthodoxy, who have mustered against it not merely a positive dislike, but a positive strength of observation and argument. Let the nature of man be a ruin, as it certainly is, it is obvious to the most common discernment, that it does not offer one unvaried and unalleviated mass of deformity. There are certain phrases, and certain exhibitions of this nature, which are more lovely than others —certain traits of character, not due to the operation of Christianity at all, and yet calling forth our admiration and our tenderness—certain varieties of moral complexion, far more fair and more engaging than certain other varieties; and to prove that the gospel may have had no share in the formation of them, they in fact stood out to the notice and respect of the world before the gospel was ever heard of. The classic page of antiquity sparkles with repeated exemplifications of what is bright and beautiful in the character of man; nor do all its descriptions of external nature waken up such an enthusiasm of pleasure, as when it bears testimony to some graceful or elevated doing out of the history of the species. And whether it be the kindliness of maternal affection, or the unweariedness of filial piety, or the constancy of tried and unalterable friendship, or the earnestness of devoted patriotism, or the rigor of unbending fidelity, or any other of the recorded virtues, which shed a glory over the remembrance of Greece and of Rome—we fully concede it to the admiring scholar, that they one and all of them were sometimes exemplified in those days of Heathenism; and that, out of the materials of a period, crowded as it was with moral abominations, there may also be gathered things which are pure, and lovely, and true, and just, and honest, and of good report.

What do we mean then, it may be asked, by the universal depravity of man? How shall we reconcile the admission now made, with the unqualified and authoritative language of the Bible, when it tells us of the totality and the magnitude of human corruption? Wherein lies that desperate wickedness, which is every where ascribed to all the men of all the families that be on the face of the earth? And how can such a tribute of ac-

knowledgment be awarded to the sages and the patriots of antiquity, who yet, as the partakers of our fallen nature, must be outcasts from the favour of God, and have the character of evil stamped upon the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts continually.

In reply to these questions, let us speak to your own experimental recollections on a subject in which you are aided, both by the consciousness of what passes within you, and by your observation of the characters of others. Might not a sense of honour elevate that heart which is totally unfurnished with a sense of God? Might not an impulse of compassionate feeling be sent into that bosom which is never once visited by a movement of duteous loyalty towards the Lawgiver in heaven? Might not occasions of intercourse with the beings around us, develope whatever there is in our nature of generosity, and friendship, and integrity, and patriotism; and yet the unseen Being, who placed us in this theatre, be neither loved nor obeyed, nor listened to? Amid the manifold varieties of human character, and the number of constitutional principles which enter into its composition, might there not be an individual in whom the constitutional virtues so blaze forth and have the ascendency, as to give a general effect of gracefulness to the whole of this moral exhibition; and yet, may not that individual be as unmindful of his God, as if the principles of his constitution had been mixed up in such a different proportion, as to make him an odious and a revolting spectacle? In a word, might not Sensibility shed forth its tears, and Friendship perform its services, and Liberality impart of its treasure, and Patriotism earn the gratitude of its country, and Honour maintain itself entire and untainted, and all the softenings of what is amiable, and all the glories of what is chivalrous and manly, gather into one bright effulgency of moral accomplishment on the person of him who never, for a single day of his life, subordinates one habit, or one affection, to the will of the Almighty; who is just as careless and as unconcerned about God, as if the native tendencies of his constitution had compounded him into a monster of deformity; and who just as effectually realizes this attribute of rebellion against his maker, as the most loathsome and profligate of the species, that he

walks in the counsel of his own heart, and after the sight of his own eyes?

The same constitutional variety may be seen on the lower fields of creation. You there witness the gentleness of one animal, the affectionate fidelity of another, the cruel and unrelenting ferocity of a third; and you never question the propriety of the language, when some of these instinctive tendencies are better reported of than others; or when it is said of the former of them, that they are the more fine, and amiable, and endearing. But it does not once occur to you, that, even in the very best of these exhibitions, there is any sense of God, or that the great master-principle of his authority is at all concerned in it. Transfer this contemplation back again to our species; and under the same complexional difference of the more and the less lovely, or the more and the less hateful, you will perceive the same utter insensibility to the consideration of a God, or the same utter inefficiency on the part of his law to subdue human habits and human inclinations. It is true, that there is one distinction between the two cases; but it all goes to aggravate the guilt and the ingratitude of man. He has an understanding which the inferior animals have not—and yet, with this understanding does he refuse practically to acknowledge God. He has a conscience, which they have not—and yet, though it whisper in the ear of his inner man the claims of an unseen legislator, does he lull away his time in the slumbers of indifference, and live without him in the world.

Or go to the people of another planet, over whom the hold of allegiance to their maker is unbroken—in whose hearts the Supreme sits enthroned, and throughout the whole of whose history there runs the perpetual and the unfailing habit of subordination to his law. It is conceivable, that with them too, there may be varieties of temper and of natural inclination, and yet all of them be under the effective control of one great and imperious principle; that in subjection to the will of God, every kind and every honourable disposition is cherished to the uttermost; and that in subjection to the same will, every tendency to anger, and malignity, and revenge, is repressed at the first moment of its threatened operation; and that in this way, there

will be the fostering of a constant encouragement given to the one set of instincts, and the struggling of a constant opposition made against the other. Now, only conceive this great bond of allegiance to be dissolved; the mighty and subordinating principle, which wont to wield an ascendency over every movement and every affection, to be loosened and done away; and then would this loyal, obedient world, become what ours is—independent of Christianity. Every constitutional desire would run out, in the unchecked spontancity of its own movements. The law of heaven would furnish no counteraction to the impulses and the tendencies of nature. And tell us, in these circumstances, when the restraint of religion was thus lifted off, and all the passions let out to take their own tumultuous and independent career—tell us, if, though amid the uproar of the licentious and vindictive propensities, there did gleam forth at times some of the finer and the lovelier sympathies of nature—tell us, if this would at all affect the state of that world as a state of enmity against God; where his will was reduced to an element of utter insignificancy; where the voice of their rightful master fell powerless on the consciences of a listless and alienated family; where humour, and interest, and propensity—at one time selfish, and at another social—took their alternate sway over those hearts from which there was excluded all effectual sense of an overruling God, If he be unheeded and disowned by the creatures whom he has formed, can it be said to alleviate the deformity of their rebellion, that they, at times, experience the impulse of some amiable feeling which he hath implanted, or at times hold out some beauteousness of aspect which he hath shed over them? Shall the value of the multitude of the gifts release them from their loyalty to the giver; and when nature puts herself into the attitude of indifference or hostility against him, now is it that the graces and the accomplishments of nature can be plead in mitigation of her antipathy to him, who invested nature with all her graces, and upholds her in the display of all her accomplishments?

The way, then, to assert the depravity of man, is to fasten on the radical element of depravity, and to show how deeply it lies incorporated with his moral constitution. It is not by an

utterance of rash and sweeping totality to refuse him the possession of what is kind in sympathy, or of what is dignified in principle—for this were in the face of all observation. It is to charge him direct with his utter disloyalty to God. It is to convict him of treason against the majesty of heaven. It is to press home upon him the impiety of not caring about God. It is to tell him, that the hourly and habitual language of his heart is, I will not have the Being who made me, to rule over me. It is to go to the man of honour, and, while we frankly award it to him that his pulse beats high in the pride of integrity—it is to tell him, that he who keeps it in living play, and who sustains the loftiness of its movements, and who, in one moment of time, could arrest it for ever, is not in all his thoughts. It is to go to the man of soft and gentle emotions, and, while we gaze in tenderness upon him—it is to read to him, out of his own character, how the exquisite mechanism of feeling may be in full operation, while he who framed it is forgotten; while he who poured into his constitution the milk of human kindness, may never be adverted to with one single sentiment of veneration, or on one single purpose of obedience; while he who gave him his gentler nature, who clothed him in all its adornments, and in virtue of whose appointment it is, that, instead of an odious and a revolting monster, he is the much loved child of sensibility, may be utterly disowned by him. In a word, it is to go round among all that Humanity has to offer in the shape of fair and amiable, and engaging, and to prove how deeply Humanity has revolted against that Being who has done so much to beautify and to exalt her. It is to prove that the carnal mind, under all its varied complexions of harshness, or of delicacy, is enmity against God. It is to prove that let nature be as rich as she may in moral accomplishments, and let the most favoured of her sons realize upon his own person the finest and the fullest assemblage of them—should he, at the moment of leaving this theatre of display, and bursting loose from the framework of mortality, stand in the presence of his judge, and have the question put to him, What hast thou done unto me? This man of constitutional virtue with all the salutations he got upon earth and all the reverence that he has left behind him, may naked

and defenceless, before him who sittteh on the throne be left without a plea and without an argument.

God's controversy with our species, is not, that the glow of honour or of humanity is never felt among them. It is, that none of them understandeth, and none of them seeketh after God. It is, that he is deposed from his rightful ascendency. It is that he, who in fact inserted in the human bosom every one principle that can embellish the individual possessor, or maintain the order of society, is banished altogether from the circle of his habitual contemplations. It is, that man taketh his way in life as much at random, as if there was no presiding Divinity at all; and that, whether he at one time grovel in the depths of sensuality, or at another kindle with some generous movement of sympathy or of patriotism, he is at both times alike unmindful of him to whom he owes his continuance and his birth. It is, that he moves his every footstep at his own will; and has utterly discarded, from its supremacy over him, the will of that invisible Master who compasses all his goings, and never ceases to pursue him by the claims of a resistless and legitimate authority. It is this which is the essential or the constituting principle of rebellion against God. This it is which has exiled the planet we live in beyond the limits of his favoured creation —and whether it be shrouded in the turpitude of licentiousness or cruelty, or occasionally brightened with the gleam of the kindly and the honourable virtues, it is thus that it is seen as afar off, by Him who sitteth on the throne, and looketh on our strayed world, as athwart a wide and a dreary gulf of separation.

And when prompted by love towards his alienated children, he devised a way of recalling them—when willing to pass over all the ingratitude he had gotten from their hands, he reared a pathway of return, and proclaimed a pardon and a welcome to all who should walk upon it—when through the offered Mediator, who magnified his broken law, and upheld, by his mysterious sacrifice, the dignity of that government, which the children of Adam had disowned, he invited all to come to him and be saved—should this message be brought to the door of the most honourable man upon earth, and he turn in contempt and hos-

tility away from it, has not that man posted himself more firmly than ever on the ground of rebellion? Though an unsullied integrity should rest upon all his transactions, and the homage of confidence and respect be awarded to him from every quarter of society, has not this man, by slighting the overtures of reconciliation, just plunged himself the deeper in the guilt of a wilful and determined ungodliness? Has not the creature exalted itself above the Creator; and in the pride of those accomplishments, which never would have invested his person had not they come to him from above, has he not, in the act of resisting the gospel, aggravated the provocation of his whole previous defiance, to the author of it?

Thus much for all that is amiable, and for all that is manly in the accomplishments of nature, disjoined from the faith of Christianity. They take up a separate residence in the human character from the principle of godliness. Anterior to this religion, they go not to alleviate the guilt of our departure from the living God; and subsequently to this religion, they may blazon the character of him who stands out against it: but on the principles of a most clear and intelligent equity, they never can shield him from the condemnation and the curse of those who have neglected the great salvation.

The doctrine of the New Testament will bear to be confronted with all that can be met or noticed on the face of human society. And we speak most confidently, to the experience of many who now hear us, when we say, that often, in the course of their manifold transactions, have they met the man, whom the bribery of no advantage whatever could seduce into the slightest deviation from the path of integrity—the man, who felt his nature within him put into a state of the most painful indignancy, at every thing that bore upon it the character of a sneaking or dishonourable artifice—the man, who positively could not be at rest under the consciousness that he had ever betrayed, even to his own heart, the remotest symptom of such an inclination—and whom, therefore, the unaided law of justice and of truth has placed on a high and deserved eminence in the walks of honourable merchandise.

Let us not withhold from this character the tribute of its most

rightful admiration; but let us further ask, if, with all that he thus possessed of native feeling and constitutional integrity, you have never observed in any such individual an utter emptiness of religion; and that God is not in all his thoughts; and that, when he does what happens to be at one with the will of the Lawgiver, it is not because he is impelled to it by a sense of its being the will of the Lawgiver, but because he is impelled to it by the working of his own instinctive sensibilities; and that however fortunate, or however estimable these sensibilities are, they still consist with the habit of a mind that is in a state of total indifference about God? Have you never read in your own character, or in the observed character of others, that the claims of the Divinity may be entirely forgotten by the very man to whom society around him yield, and rightly yield, the homage of an unsullied and honourable reputation; that this man may have all his foundations in the world; that every security on which he rests, and every enjoyment upon which his heart is set, lieth on this side of death; that a sense of the coming day on which God is to enter into judgment with him, is, to every purpose of practical ascendency, as good as expunged altogether from his bosom; that he is far in desire, and far in enjoyment, and far in habitual contemplation, away from that God who is not far from any one of us; that his extending credit, and his brightening prosperity, and his magnificent retreat from business, with all the splendour of its accommodations—that these are the futurities at which he terminates; and that he goes not in thought beyond them to that eternity, which, in the flight of a few little years, will absorb all, and annihilate all? In a word, have you never observed the man, who, with all that was right in mercantile principle, and all that was open and unimpeachable in the habit of his mercantile transactions, lived in a state of utter estrangement from the concerns of immortality? who, in reference to God, persisted, from one year to another, in the spirit of a deep slumber? who, in reference to the man that tries to awaken him out of his lethargy, recoils, with the most sensitive dislike, from the faithfulness of his ministrations? who, in reference to the Book which tells him of his nakedness and his guilt, never consults it with one practical aim, and ne-

ver tries to penetrate beyond that aspect of mysteriousness which it holds out to an undiscerning world? who attends not church, or attends it with all the lifelessness of a form? who reads not his Bible, or reads it in the discharge of a self-prescribed and unfruitful task? who prays not, or prays with the mockery of an unmeaning observation? and, in one word, who while surrounded by all those testimonies which give to man a place of moral distinction among his fellows, is living in utter carelessness about God, and about all the avenues which lead to him?

Now, attend for a moment to what that is which the man has, and to what that is which he has not. He has an attribute of character which is in itself pure, and lovely, and honourable, and of good report. He has a natural principle of integrity; and under its impulse he may be carried forward to such fine exhibitions of himself, as are worthy of all admiration. It is very noble, when the simple utterance of his word carries as much security along with it, as if he had accompanied that utterance by the signatures, and the securities, and the legal obligations, which are required of other men. It might tempt one to be proud of his species when he looks at the faith that is put in him by a distant correspondent, who, without one other hold of him than his honour, consigns to him the wealth of a whole flotilla, and sleeps in the confidence that it is safe. It is indeed an animating thought, amid the gloom of this world's depravity, when we behold the credit which one man puts in another, though separated by oceans and by continents; when he fixes the anchor of a sure and steady dependence on the reported honesty of one whom he never saw; when, with all his fears for the treachery of the varied elements, through which his property has to pass, he knows, that should it only arrive at the door of its destined agent, all his fears and all his suspicions may be at an end. We know nothing finer than such an act of homage from one human being to another, when perhaps the diameter of the globe is between them; nor do we think that either the renown of her victories, or the wisdom of her councils, so signalizes the country in which we live, as does the honourable dealing of her merchants; that all the glories of

British policy, and British valour, are far eclipsed by the moral splendour which British faith has thrown over the name and the character of our nation; nor has she gathered so proud a distinction from all the tributaries of her power, as she has done from the awarded confidence of those men of all tribes, and colours, and languages, who look to our agency for the most faithful of all management, and to our keeping for the most unviolable of all custody.

There is no denying, then, the very extended prevalence of a principle of integrity in the commercial world; and he who has such a principle within him, has that to which all the epithets of our text may rightly be appropriated. But it is just as impossible to deny, that, with this thing which he has, there may be another thing which he has not. He may not have one duteous feeling of reverence which points upward to God. He may not have one wish, or one anticipation, which points forward to eternity. He may not have any sense of dependence on the Being who sustains him; and who gave him his very principle of honour, as part of that interior furniture which he has put into his bosom; and who surrounded him with the theatre on which he has come forward with the finest and most illustrious displays of it; and who set the whole machinery of his sentiment and action agoing; and can, by a single word of his power, bid it cease from the variety, and cease from the gracefulness, of its movements. In other words, he is a man of integrity, and yet he is a man of ungodliness.

He is a man born for the confidence and the admiration of his fellows, and yet a man whom his maker can charge with utter defection from all the pinciples of a spiritual obedience. He is a man whose virtues have blazoned his own character in time, and have upheld the interests of society, and yet a man who has not, by one movement of principle brought himself nearer to the kingdom of heaven, than the most profligate of the species. The condemnation, that he is an alien from God, rests upon him in all the weight of its unmitigated severity. The threat, that they who forget God shall be turned into hell, will on the great day of its fell and sweeping operation, involve him among the wretched outcasts of eternity. That God from whom,

while in the world, he withheld every due offering of gratitude, and remembrance, and universal subordination of habit and of desire, will show him to his face how under the delusive garb of such sympathies as drew upon him the love of his acquaintances, and of such integrities as drew upon him their respect and their confidence, he was in fact a determined rebel against the authority of heaven; that not one commandment of the law, in the true extent of its interpretation, was ever fulfilled by him; that the pervading principle of obedience to this law, which is love to God, never had its ascendency over him; that the beseeching voice of the Lawgiver, so offended and so insulted—but who, nevertheless, devised in love a way of reconciliation for the guilty, never had the effect of recalling him; that, in fact, he neither had a wish for the friendship of God, nor cherished the hope of enjoying him, and that therefore, as he lived without hope, so he lived without God in the world; finding all his desire, and all his sufficiency, to be somewhere else, than in that favour which is better than life, and so, in addition to the curse of having continued not in all the words of the book of God's law to do them, entailing upon himself the mighty aggravation of having neglected all the offers of his gospel.

We say, then, of this natural virtue, what our Saviour said of the virtue of the Pharisees, many of whom were not extortioners, as other men—that, verily, it hath its reward. When disjoined from a sense of God, it is of no religious estimation whatever; nor will it lead to any religious blessing, either in time or in eternity. It has, however, its enjoyments annexed to it, just as a fine taste has its enjoyments annexed to it; and in these it is abundantly rewarded. It is exempted from that painfulness of inward feeling which nature has annexed to every act of departure from honesty. It is sustained by a conscious sense of rectitude and elevation. It is gratified by the homage of society; the members of which are ever ready to award the tribute of acknowledgment to those virtues that support the interests of society. And finally, it may be said, that prosperity, with some occasional variations is the general accompaniment of that credit, which every man of undeviating justice is sure to draw

around him. But what reward, will you tell us is due to him on the great day of the manifestation of God's righteousness, when, in fact, he has done nothing unto God? What recompence can be awarded to him out of those books which are then to be opened, and in which he stands recorded as a man overcharged with the guilt of spiritual idolatry? How shall God grant unto him the reward of a servant, when the service of God was not the principle of his doings in the world; and when neither the justice he rendered to others, nor the sensibility that he felt for them, bore the slightest character of an offering to his maker?

But wherever the religious principle has taken possession of the mind, it animates these virtues with a new spirit; and when so animated, all such things as are pure, and lovely, and just, and true, and honest, and of good report, have a religious importance and character belonging to them. The text forms part of an epistle addressed to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which were at Philippi; and the lesson of the text is matter of direct and authoritative enforcement, on all who are saints in Christ Jesus at the present day. Christianity, with the weight of its positive sanctions on the side of what is amiable and honourable in human virtue, causes such an influence to rest on the character of its genuine disciples, that, on the ground both of inflexible justice and ever-breathing charity, they are ever sure to leave the vast majority of the world behind them. Simplicity and godly sincerity form essential ingredients of that peculiarity by which they stand signalized in the midst of an ungodly generation. The true friends of the gospel, tremblingly alive to the honour of their master's cause, blush for the disgrace that has been brought on it by men who keep its sabbaths, and yield an ostentatious homage to its doctrines and its sacraments. They utterly disclaim all fellowship with that vile association of cant and of duplicity, which has sometimes been exemplified, to the triumph of the enemies of religion; and they both feel the solemn truth, and act on the authority of the saying, that neither thieves, nor liars, nor extortioners, nor unrighteous persons, have any part in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

DISCOURSE II.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN AIDING AND AUGMENTING THE MERCANTILE VIRTUES.

ROMANS XIV. 18.

For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

We have already asserted the natural existence of such principles in the heart of man, as lead him to many graceful and to many honourable exhibitions of character. We have further asserted, that this formed no deduction whatever from that article of orthodoxy which affirms the utter depravity of our nature; that the essence of this depravity lies in man having broken loose from the authority of God, and delivered himself wholly up to the guidance of his own inclinations; that though some of these inclinations are in themselves amiable features of human character, and point in their effects to what is most useful to human society, yet devoid as they all are of any reference to the will and to the rightful sovereignty of the Supreme Being, they could not avert, or even so much as alleviate, that charge of ungodliness, which may be fully carried round amongst all the sons and daughters of the species; that they furnish not the materials of any valid or satisfactory answer to the question, "What hast thou done unto God!" and that whether they are the desires of a native rectitude, or the desires of an instinctive benevolence, they go not to purge away the guilt of having no love, and no care, for the Being who formed and who sustains them.

But what is more. If the virtues and accomplisments of na-

ture are at all to be admitted into the controversy between God and man, instead of forming any abatement upon the enormity of our guilt, they stamp upon it the reproach of a still deeper and more determined ingratitude. Let us conceive it possible, for a moment, that the beautiful personifications of scripture were all realized; that the trees of the forest clapped their hands unto God, and that the isles were glad at his presence; that the little hills shouted on every side, and the vallies covered over with corn sent forth their notes of rejoicing; that the sun and the moon praised him, and the stars of light joined in the solemn adoration; that the voice of glory to God was heard from every mountain and from every water-fall; and that all nature, animated throughout by the consciousness of a pervading and presiding Deity, burst into one loud and universal song of gratulation. Would not a strain of greater loftiness be heard to ascend from those regions where the all-working God had left the traces of his own immensity, than from the tamer and the humbler scenery of an ordinary landscape? Would not you look for a gladder acclamation from the fertile field, than from the arid waste, where no character of grandeur made up for the barrenness that was around you? Would not the goodly tree, compassed about with the glories of its summer foliage, lift up an anthem of louder gratitude, than the lowly shrub that grew beneath it? Would not the flower, from whose leaves every hue of loveliness was reflected, send forth a sweeter rapture than the russet weed, which never drew the eye of any admiring passenger? And in a word, wherever you saw the towering eminences of nature, or the garniture of her more rich and beauteous adornments, would it not be there that you looked for the deepest tones of devotion, or there for the tenderest and most exquisite of its melodies?

There is both the sublime of character, and the beauteous of character exemplified upon man. We have the one in that high sense of honour, which no interest and no terror can seduce from any of its obligations. We have the other in that kindliness of feeling, which one look, or one sigh, of imploring distress can touch into liveliest sympathy. Only grant that we have nothing either in the constitution of our spirits, or in the

structure of our bodies, which we did not receive; and that mind, with all its varieties, is as much the product of a creating hand, as matter in all its modifications; and then, on the face of human society, do we witness all the gradations of a moral scenery, which may be directly referred to the operation of him who worketh all in all. It is our belief, that, as to any effectual sense of God, there is as deep a slumber throughout the whole of this world's living and rational generations, as there is throughout all the diversities of its mute and unconscious materialism; and that to make our alienated spirits again alive unto the Father of them, calls for as distinct and as miraculous an exertion of the Divinity, as would need to be put forth in the act of turning stones into the children of Abraham. Conceive this to be done then—and that a quickening and a realizing sense of the Deity pervaded all the men of our species—and that each knew how to refer his own endowments, with an adequate expressien of gratitude to the unseen author of them—from whom we ask of all these various individuals, would you look for the halleluiahs of devoutest ecstacy? Would it not be from him whom God had arrayed in the splendour of nature's brightest accomplishments? Would it not be from him, with whose constitutional feelings the movements of honour and benevolence were in fullest harmony? Would it not be from him whom his maker had cast into the happiest mould, and attempered into sweetest unison with all that was kind, and generous, and lovely, and ennobled by the loftiest emotions, and raised above his fellows into the finest spectacle of all that was graceful and all that was manly? Surely, if the possession of these moralities be just another theme of acknowledgment to the Lord of the spirits of all flesh, then, if the acknowledgment be withheld, and these moralities have taken up their residence in the bosom of him who is utterly devoid of piety, they go to aggravate the reproach of his ingratitude; and to prove, that of all the men upon earth who are far from God, he stands at the widest distance, he remains proof against the weightiest claims, and he, of the dead in trespasses and sins, is the most profound ly asleep to the call of religion, and to the supremacy of its righteous obligations.

It is by argument such as this, that we would attempt to convince of sin, those who have a righteousness that is without godliness; and to prove, that, with the possession of such things as are pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report, they in fact can only be admitted to reconciliation with God, on the same footing with the most worthless and profligate of the species; and to demonstrate, that they are in the very same state of need and of nakedness, and are therefore children of wrath, even as others; that it is only through faith in the preaching of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that they can be saved; and that unless brought down from the delusive eminency of their own conscious attainments, they take their forgiveness through the blood of the Redeemer, and their sanctification through the spirit which is at his giving, they shall obtain no part in that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

But the gospel of Jesus Christ does something more than hold out a refuge to the guilty. It takes all those who accept of its overtures under its supreme and exclusive direction. It keeps by them in the way of counsel, and exhortation, and constant superintendence. The grace which it reveals, is a grace which not merely saves all men, but which teaches all men. He who is the proposed Saviour, also claims to be the alone master of those who put their trust in him. His cognizance extends itself over the whole line of their history; and there is not an affection of their heart, or a deed of their visible conduct, over which he does not assert the right of an authority that is above all control, and that refuses all rivalship.

Now, we want to point your attention to a distinction which obtains between one set and another set of his requirements. By the former, we are enjoined to practise certain virtues, which, separately from his injunction altogether, are in great demand, and in great reverence, amongst the members of society—such as compassion, and generosity and justice, and truth; which, independently of the religious sanction they obtain from the law of the Saviour, are in themselves so lovely, and so honourable, and of such good report, that they are ever sure to carry general applause along with them, and thus to

combine both the characteristics of our text—that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both acceptable to God, and approved of men.

But there is another set of requirements, where the will of God, instead of being seconded by the applause of men, is utterly at variance with it. There are some who can admire the generous sacrifices that are made to truth or to friendship, but who, without one opposing scruple, abandon themselves to all the excesses of riot and festivity, and are therefore the last to admire the puritanic sobriety of him whom they cannot tempt to put his chastity or his temperance away from him; though the same God, who bids us lie not one to another, also bids us keep the body under subjection, and to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Again, there are some in whose eyes an unvitiated delicacy looks a beauteous and an interesting spectacle, and an undeviating self-control looks a manly and respectable accomplishment; but who have no taste in themselves, and no admiration in others, for the more direct exercises of religion; and who positively hate the strict and unbending preciseness of those who join in every ordinance, and on every returning night celebrate the praises of God in their family; and that, though the heavenly Lawgiver, who tells us to live righteously and soberly, tells us also to live godly in the present evil world. And lastly, there are some who have not merely a toleration, but a liking for all the decencies of an established observation; but who, with the homage they pay to sabbaths and to sacraments, nauseate the Christian principle in the supreme and regenerating vitality of its influences; who, under a general religiousness of aspect, are still in fact the children of the world—and therefore hate the children of light in all that is peculiar and essentially characteristic of that high designation; who understand not what is meant by having our conversation in heaven; and utter strangers to the separated walk, and the spiritual exercises, and the humble devotedness, and the consecrated affections, of the new creature in Jesus Christ, shrink from them altogether as from the extravagancies of a fanaticism in which they have no share, and with which they can have no sympathy—and all this, though the same

scripture which prescribes the exercises of household and of public religion, lays claim to an undivided authority over all the desires and affections of the soul; and will admit of no compromise between God and the world; and insist upon an utter deadness to the one, and a most vehement sensibility to the other; and elevates the standard of loyalty to the Father of our Spirits, to the lofty pitch of loving him with all our strength, and of doing all things to his glory.

Let these examples serve to impress a real and experimental distinction which obtains between two sets of virtues; between those which possess the single ingredient of being approved by God, while they want the ingredient of being also acceptable unto men—and those which possess both these ingredients, and to the observance of which, therefore, we may be carried by a regard to the will of God, without any reference to the opinion of men—or by a regard to the opinion of men, without any reference to the will of God. Among the first class of virtues we would assign a foremost place to all those inward and spiritual graces which enter into the obedience of the affections —highly approved of God, but not at all acceptable to the general taste, or carrying along with them the general congeniality of the world. And then, though they do not possess the ingredient of God's robatiappon in a way so separate and unmixed, we would say that abstinence from profane language, and attendance upon church and a strict keeping of the sabbath, and the exercises of family worship, and the more rigid degrees of sobriety, and a fearful avoidance of every encroachment on temperance or chastity, rank more appropriately with the first than with the second class of virtues; for though there be many in society who have no religion, and yet to whom several of these virtues are acceptable, yet you will allow, that they do not convey such a universal popularity along with them, as certain other virtues which belong indisputably to the second class. These are the virtues which have a more obvious and immediate bearing on the interest of society—such as the truth which is punctual to all its engagements, and the honour which never disappoints the confidence it has inspired, and the compassion which cannot look unmoved at any of the symptoms of human

wretchedness, and the generosity which scatters unsparingly around it. These are virtues which God has enjoined, and in behalf of which man lifts the testimony of a loud and ready admiration—virtues in which there is a meeting and a combining of both the properties of our text; so that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both approved of God, and acceptable unto men.

Let a steady hold be kept of this distinction, and it will be found capable of being turned to very useful application, both to the object of illustrating principle, and to the important object of detecting character. For this purpose, let us carry the distinction along with us, and make it subservient to the establishment of two or three successive observations.

First. A man may possess, to a considerable extent, the second class of virtues, and not possess so much as one iota of the religious principle; and that among other reasons, because a man may feel a value for one of the attributes which belongs to this class of virtues, and have no value whatever for the other attribute. If justice be both approved by God, and acceptable to men, he may on the latter property alone, be induced to the strictest maintenance of this virtue—and that without suffering its former property to have any practical influence whatever on any of his habits, or any of his determinations: and the same with every other virtue belonging to this second class. As residing in his character, there may not be the ingredient of godliness in any one of them. He may be well reported on account of them by men; but with God he may lie under as fearful a severity of reckoning, as if he wanted them altogether. Surely, it does not go to alleviate the withdrawment of your homage from God, that you have such an homage to the opinion of men, as influences you to do things, to the doing of which the law of God is not able to influence you. It cannot be said to palliate the revolting of your inclinations from the Creator, that you have transferred them all to the creature; and given an ascendency to the voice of human reputation, which you have refused to the voice and authority of your Lawgiver in heaven. Your want of subordination to him, is surely not made up by the respectful subordination that you render to the taste or the

judgment of society. And in addition to this, we would have you to remember, that though other constitutional principles, besides a regard to the opinion of others, helped to form the virtues of the second class upon your character; though compassion, and generosity, and truth, would have broken out into full and flourishing display upon you, and that, just because you had a native sensibility, or a native love of rectitude; yet, if the first ingredient be wanting, if a regard to the approbation of God have no share in the production of the moral accomplishment—then all the morality you can pretend to, is of as little religious estimation, and is as utterly disconnected with the rewards of religion, as all the elegance of taste you can pretend to, or all the raptured love of music you can pretend to, or all the vigour and dexterity of bodily exercise you can pretend to. All these, in reference to the great question of immortality, profit but little; and it is godliness alone that is profitable unto all things. It is upon this consideration that we would have you to open your eyes to the nakedness of your condition in the sight of God; to look to the full weight of the charge that he may prefer against you; to estimate the fearful extent of the deficiency under which you labour; to resist the delusive whispering of peace, when there is no peace; and to understand, that the wrath of God abideth on every child of nature, however rich he may be in the virtues and accomplishments of nature.

But again. This view of the distinction between the two sets of virtues, will serve to explain how it is, that, in the act of turning unto God, the one class of them appears to gather more copiously, and more conspicuously, upon the front of a renewed character, than the other class; how it is that the former wear a more unequivocal aspect of religiousness than the latter; how it is, that an air of gravity, and decency, and seriousness, looks to be more in alliance with sanctity, than the air either of open integrity, or of smiling benevolence; how it is, that the most ostensible change in the habit of a converted profligate, is that change in virtue of which he withdraws himself from the companions of his licentiousness; and that to renounce the dissipations of his former life stands far more frequently, or, at least, far more visibly, associated with the act of putting on

Christianity, than to renounce the dishonesties of his former life. It is true, that, by the law of the gospel, he is laid as strictly under the authority of the commandment to live righteously, as of the commandment to live soberly. But there is a compound character in those virtues which are merely social; and the presence of the one ingredient serves to throw into the shade, or to disguise altogether, the presence of the other ingredient. There is a greater number of irreligious men, who are at the same time just in their dealings, than there is of irligious men, who are at the same time pure and temperate in their habits; and therefore it is that justice, even the most scrupulous, is not so specifical, and of course not so satisfying a mark of religion, as is a sobriety that is rigid and unviolable. And all this helps to explain how it is, that when a man comes under the power of religion, to abandon the levities of his past conduct is an event which stands far more noticeably out upon him, at this stage of his history, than to abandon the iniquities of his past conduct; that the most characteristic transformation which takes place at such a time, is a transformation from thoughtlessness, and from licentious gaiety, and from the festive indulgencies of those with whom he is wont to run to all those excesses of riot, of which the Apostle says, that they which do these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God: for even then, and in the very midst of all his impiety, he may have been kind-hearted, and there might be no room upon his person for a visible transformation from inhumanity of character; even then, he may have been honourable, and there might be as little room for a visible transformation from fraudulency of character.

Thirdly. Nothing is more obvious than the antipathy that is felt by a certain class of religionists against the preaching of good works; and the antipathy is assuredly well and warrantably grounded, when it is such a preaching as goes to reduce the importance, or to infringe upon the simplicity, of the great doctrine of justification by faith, but along with this, may there not be remarked the toleration with which they will listen to a discourse upon one set of good works, and the evident coldness and dislike with which they listen to a discourse on another set of them; how a pointed remonstrance against sabbath breaking

sounds in their ears, as if more in character from the pulpit, than a pointed remonstrance against the commission of theft, or the speaking of evil; how an eulogium on the observance of family worship feels, in their taste, to be more impregnated with the spirit of sacredness, than an eulogium on the virtues of the shop, or of the market-place; and that while the one is approved of as having about it the solemn and the suitable characteristics of godliness, the other is stigmatized as a piece of barren, heartless, heathenish, and philosophic morality? Now, this antipathy to the preaching of the latter species of good works, has something peculiar in it. It is not enough to say, that it arises from a sensitive alarm about the stability of the doctrine of justification; for let it be observed, that this doctrine stands opposed to the merit not of one particular class of performances, but to the merit of all performances whatsoever. It is just as unscriptural a detraction from the great truth of salvation by faith, to rest our acceptance with God on the duties of prayer, or of rigid sabbath keeping, or of strict and untainted sobriety, as to rest it on the punctual fulfilment of all your bargains, and on the extent of your manifold liberalities. It is not, then, a mere zeal about the great article of justification which lies at the bottom of that peculiar aversion that is felt towards a sermon on some social or humane accomplishment; and that is not felt towards a sermon on sobermindedness, or a sermon on the observation of the sacrament, or a sermon on any of those performances which bear a more direct and exclusive reference to God. We shall find the explanation of this phenomenon, which often presents itself in the religious world, in that distinction of which we have just required that it should be kept in steady hold, and followed into its various applications. The aversion in question is often in fact, a well founded aversion, to a topic, which, though religious in the matter of it, may, from the way in which it is proposed, be altogether secular in the principle of it. It is resistance to what is deemed, and justly deemed, an act of usurpation on the part of certain virtues, which, when unanimated by a sentiment of godliness, are entitled to no place whatever in the ministrations of the gospel of Christ. It proceeds from a most enlightened fear, lest that

should be held to make up the whole of religion, which is in fact utterly devoid of the spirit of religion; and from a true and tender apprehension, lest, on the possession of certain accomplishments, which secure a fleeting credit throughout the little hour of this world's history, deluded man should look forward to his eternity with hope, and upward to his God with complacency—while he carries not on his forehead one vestige of the character of heaven, one lineament of the aspect of godliness.

And lastly. The first class of virtues bear the character of religiousness more *strongly*, just because they bear that character more *singly*. The people who are without, might, no doubt, see in every real Christian the virtues of the second class also; but these virtues do not belong to them peculiarly and exclusively. For though it be true, that every religious man must be honest, the converse does not follow, that every honest man must be religious. And it is because the social accomplishments do not form the specific, that neither do they form the most prominent, and distinguishing marks of Christianity. They may also be recognized as features in the character of men, who utterly repudiate the whole style and doctrine of the New Testament; and hence a very prevalent impression in society, that the faith of the gospel does not bear so powerfully and so directly on the relative virtues of human conduct. A few instances of hypocrisy amongst the more serious professors of our faith, serve to rivet the impression, and to give it perpetuity in the world. One single example, indeed, of sanctimonious duplicity, will suffice, in the judgment of many, to cover the whole of vital and orthodox Christianity with disgrace. The report of it will be borne in triumph amongst the companies of the irreligious. The man who pays no homage to sabbaths or to sacraments, will be contrasted in the open, liberal, and manly style, of all his transactions, with the low cunning of this drivelling methodistical pretender; and the loud laugh of a multitude of scorners, will give a force and a swell to this public outcry against the whole character of the sainthood.

Now, this delusion on the part of the unbelieving world is very natural, and ought not to excite our astonishment. We are not surprised, from the reasons already adverted to, that the

truth, and the justice, and the humanity, and the moral loveliness, which do in fact belong to every new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord, should miss their observation; or, at least, fail be to recognized among the other more obvious characteristics into which believers have been translated by the faith of the gospel. But, on this very subject there is a tendency to delusion on the part of the disciples of the faith. They need to be reminded of the solemn and indispensable religiousness of the second class of virtues. They need to be told, that though these virtues do possess the one ingredient of being approved by men, and may, on this single account, be found to reside in the characters of those who live without God—yet, that they also possess the other ingredient of being acceptable unto God; and, on this latter account, should be made the subjects of their most strenuous cultivation. They must not lose sight of the one ingredient in the other; or stigmatize, as so many fruitless and insignificant moralities, those virtues which enter as component parts, into the service of Christ; so that he who in these things serveth Christ, is both acceptable to God, and approved by men. They must not expend all their warmth on the high and peculiar doctrine of the New Testament, while they offer a cold and reluctant admission to the practical duties of the New Testament. The Apostle has bound the one to the other by a tie of immediate connexion. Wherefore, lie not one to another, as ye have put off the old man and his deeds, and put on the new man, which is formed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. Here the very obvious and popular accomplishment of truth is grafted on the very peculiar doctrine of regeneration: and you altogether mistake the kind of transforming influence which the faith of the gospel brings along with it, if you think that uprightness of character does not emerge at the same time with godliness of character; or that the virtues of society do not form upon the believer into as rich and varied an assemblage, as do the virtues of the sanctuary; or that, while he puts on those graces which are singly acceptable to God, he falls behind in any of those graces which are both acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Let, therefore, every pretender to Christianity vindicate this

assertion by his own personal history in the world. Let him not lay his godliness aside, when he is done with the morning devotion of his family; but carry it abroad with him, and make it his companion and his guide through the whole business of the day; always bearing in his heart the sentiment, that thou God seest me: and remembering, that there is not one hour that can flow, or one occasion that can cast up, where his law is not present with some imperious exaction or other. It is false, that the principle of christian sanctification possesses no influence over the familiarities of civil and ordinary life. It is altogether false, that godliness is a virtue of such a lofty and monastic order, as to hold its dominion only over the solemnities of worship, or over the solitudes of prayer and spiritual contemplation. If it be substantially a grace within us at all, it will give a direction and a colour to the whole of our path in society. There is not one conceivable transaction, amongst all the manifold varieties of human employment, which it is not fitted to animate by its spirit. There is nothing that meets us too homely, to be beyond the reach of obtaining, from its influence, the stamp of something celestial. It offers to take the whole man under its ascendency, and to subordinate all his movements: nor does it hold the place which rightfully belongs to it, till it be vested with a presiding authority over the entire system of human affairs. And therefore it is, that the preacher is not bringing down Christianity—he is only sending it abroad over the field of its legitimate operation, when he goes with it to your counting-houses, and there rebukes every selfish inclination that would carry you ever so little within the limits of fraudulency; when he enters into your chambers of agency, and there detects the character of falsehood, which lurks under all the plausibility of your multiplied and excessive charges; when he repairs to the crowded market-place, and pronounces of every bargain, over which truth, in all the strictness of quakerism, has not presided, that it is tainted with moral evil; when he looks into your shops, and, in listening to the contest of argument between him who magnifies his article, and him who pretends to undervalue it, he calls it the contest of avarice, broken loose from the restraints of integrity. He is not, by all this, vulgarizing reli-

gion, or giving it the hue and the character of earthliness. He is only asserting the might and the universality of its sole pre-eminence over man. And therefore it is, that if possible to solemnize his hearers to the practice of simplicity and godly sincerity in their dealings, he would try to make the odiousness of sin stand visibly out on every shade and modification of dishonesty; and to assure them that if there be a place in our world, where the subtle evasion, and the dexterous imposition, and the sly but gainful concealment, and the report which misleads an inquirer, and the gloss which tempts the unwary purchaser—are not only currently practised in the walks of merchandise, but, when not carried forward to the glare and the literality of falsehood, are beheld with general connivance; if there be a place where the sense of morality has thus fallen, and all the nicer delicacies of conscience are overborne in the keen and ambitious rivalry of men hasting to be rich, and wholly given over to the idolatrous service of the god of this world—then that is the place, the smoke of whose iniquity rises before Him who sitteth on the throne, in a tide of deepest and most revolting abomination.

And here we have to complain of the public injustice that is done to Christianity, when one of its ostentatious professors has acted the hypocrite, and stands in disgraceful exposure before the eyes of the world. We advert to the readiness with which this is turned into a matter of general impeachment, against every appearance of seriousness; and how loud the exclamation is against the religion of all who signalize themselves; and that, if the aspect of godliness be so very decided as to become an aspect of peculiarity, then is this peculiarity, converted into a ground of distrust and suspicion against the bearer of it. Now, it so happens, that in the midst of this world lying in wickedness, a man, to be a Christian at all, must signalize himself. Neither is he in a way of salvation, unless he be one of a very peculiar people; nor would we precipitately consign him to discredit, even though the peculiarity be so very glaring as to provoke the charge of methodism. But instead of making one man's hypocrisy act as a draw-back upon the reputation of a thousand, we submit, if it would not be a fairer and more phi-

losophical procedure, just to betake one's-self to the method of induction—to make a walking survey over the town, and record an inventory of all the men in it who are so very far gone as to have the voice of psalms in their family; or as to attend the meetings of fellowship for prayer; or as scrupulously to abstain from all that is questionable in the amusements of the world; or as, by any other marked and visible symptom whatever, to stand out to general observation as the members of a saintly and separated society. We know, that even of such there are a few, who, if Paul were alive, would move him to weep for the reproach they bring upon his master. But we also know, that the blind and impetuous world exaggerates the few into the many; inverts the process of atonement altogether, by laying the sins of one man upon the multitude; looks at their general aspect of sanctity, and is so engrossed with this single expression of character, as to be insensible to the noble uprightness, and the tender humanity with which this sanctity is associated. And therefore it is that we offer the assertion, and challenge all to its most thorough and searching investigation that the Christianity of these people, which many think does nothing but cant, and profess, and run after ordinances, has augmented their honesties and their liberalities, and that, tenfold beyond the average character of society; that these are the men we oftenest meet with in the mansions of poverty—and who look with the most wakeful eye over all the sufferings and necessities of our species—and who open their hand most widely in behalf of the imploring and the friendless—and to whom, in spite of all their mockery, the men of the world are sure, in the negociations of business, to award the readiest confidence—and who sustain the most splendid part in all those great movements of philantrophy which bear on the general interests of mankind —and who, with their eye full upon eternity, scatter the most abundant blessings over the fleeting pilgrimage of time—and who, while they hold their conversation in heaven, do most enrich the earth we tread upon, with all those virtues which secure enjoyment to families, and uphold the order and prosperity of the commonwealth.

DISCOURSE III.

THE POWER OF SELFISHNESS IN PROMOTING THE HONESTIES OF MERCANTILE INTERCOURSE.

LUKE vi. 33.

And if you do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

It is to be remarked of many of those duties, the performance of which confers the least distinction upon an individual, that they are at the same time the very duties, the violation of which would confer upon him the largest measure of obloquy and disgrace. Truth and justice do not serve to elevate a man so highly above the average morality of his species, as would generosity or ardent friendship, or devoted and disinterested patriotism; the former are greatly more common than the latter; and, on that account, the presence of them is not so calculated to signalize the individual to whom they belong. But that is one account, also, why the absence of them would make him a more monstrous exception to the general run of character in society. And, accordingly, while it is true, that there are more men of integrity in the world, than there are men of very wide and liberal beneficence—it is also true, that one act of falsehood, or one act of dishonesty, would stamp a far more burning infamy on the name of a transgressor than any defect in those more heroic charities, and extraordinary virtues, of which humanity is capable.

So it is far more disgraceful not to be just to another, than not to be kind to him; and, at the same time, an act of kindness may be held in higher positive estimation than an act of justice. The one is my right—nor is there any call for the homage of a

particular testimony when it is rendered. The other is additional to my right—the offering of a spontaneous good will, which I had no title to exact; and which, therefore when rendered to me, excites in my bosom the cordiality of a warmer acknowledgment. And yet, our Saviour, who knew what was in man, saw, that much of the apparent kindness of nature, was resolvable into the real selfishness of nature; that much of the good done unto others, was done in the hope that these others would do something again. And, we believe, it would be found by an able analyst of the human character, that this was the secret but substantial principle of many of the civilities and hospitalities of ordinary intercourse—that if there were no expectation either of a return in kind, or of a return in gratitude, or of a return in popularity, many of the sweetening and cementing virtues of a neighbourhood would be practically done away—all serving to prove, that a multitude of virtues, which, in effect, promoted the comfort and the interest of others, were tainted in principle by a latent regard to one's own interest; and that thus being the fellowship of those who did good, either as a return for the good done unto them, or who did good in hope of such a return, it might be, in fact, what our Saviour characterizes it in the text—the fellowship of sinners.

But if to do that which is unjust, is still more disgraceful than not to do that which is kind, it would prove more strikingly than before, how deeply sin had tainted the moral constitution of our species—could it be shown, that the great practical restraint on the prevalence of this more disgraceful thing in society, is the tie of that common selfishness which actuates and characterizes all its members. It were a curious but important question, were it capable of being resolved—if men did not feel it their interest to be honest, how much of the actual doings of honesty would still be kept up in the world? It is our own opinion of the nature of man, that it has its honourable feelings, and its instinctive principles of rectitude, and its constitutional love of truth and of integrity; and that, on the basis of these, a certain portion of uprightness would remain amongst us, without the aid of any prudence, or any calculation whatever. All this we have fully conceded; and have already attempted to demon-

strate, that, in spite of it, the character of man is thoroughly pervaded by the very essence of sinfulness; because, with all the native virtues which adorn it, there adheres to it that foulest of all spiritual deformities—unconcern about God, and even antipathy to God. It has been argued against the orthodox doctrine of the universality of human corruption, that even without the sphere of the operation of the gospel, there do occur so many engaging specimens of worth and benevolence in society. The reply is, that this may be no deduction from the doctrine whatever, but be even an aggravation of it—should the very men who exemplify so much of what is amiable, carry in their hearts an indifference to the will of that Being who thus hath formed, and thus hath embellished them. But it would be a heavy deduction indeed, not from the doctrine, but from its hostile and opposing argument, could it be shown, that the vast majority of all equitable dealing amongst men, is performed, not on the principle of honour at all, but on the principle of selfishness—that this is the soil upon which the honesty of the world mainly flourishes, and is sustained; that, were the connexion dissolved between justice to others and our own particular advantage, this would go very far to banish the observation of justice from the earth; that, generally speaking, men are honest, not because they are lovers of God, and not even because they are lovers of virtue, but because they are lovers of their own-selves—insomuch, that if it were possible to disjoin the good of self altogether from the habit of doing what was fair, as well as from the habit of doing what was kind to the people around us, this would not merely isolate the children of men from each other, in respect of the obligations of beneficence, but it would arm them into an undisguised hostility against each other, in respect to their rights. The mere disinterested principle would set up a feeble barrier, indeed, against a desolating tide of selfishness, now set loose from the consideration of its own advantage. The genuine depravity of the human heart would burst forth and show itself in its true characters; and the world in which we live be transformed into a scene of unblushing fraud, of open and lawless depredation.

And, perhaps, after all, the best way of arriving practically

at the solution of this question would be, not by a formal induction of particular cases, but by committing the matter to the gross and general experience of those who are most conversant in the affairs of business.—There is a sort of undefinable impression you all have upon this subject, on the justness of which however, we are disposed to lay a very considerable stress—an impression gathered out of the mass of the recollections of a whole life—an impression founded on what you may have observed in the history of your own doings—a kind of tact that you have acquired as the fruit of your repeated intercourse with men, and of the manifold transactions that you have had with them, and of the number of times in which you have been personally implicated with the play of human passions, and human interests. It is our own conviction, that a well exercised merchant could cast a more intelligent glance at this question, than a well exercised metaphysician; and therefore do we submit its decision to those of you who have hazarded most largely, and most frequently, on the faith of agents, and customers, and distant correspondents. We know the fact of a very secure and well warranted confidence in the honesty of others, being widely prevalent amongst you: and that, were it not for this, all the interchanges of trade would be suspended; and that confidence is the very soul and life of commercial activity; and it is delightful to think, how thus a man can suffer all the wealth which belongs to him to depart from under his eye, and to traverse the mightiest oceans and continents of our world, and to pass into the custody of men whom he never saw. And it is a sublime homage, one should think, to the honourable and high-minded principles of our nature, that, under their guardianship, the adverse hemispheres of the globe should be bound together in safe and profitable merchandise; and that thus one should sleep with a bosom undisturbed by jealousy, in Britian, who has all, and more than all his property treasured in the warehouses of India —and that, just because there he knows there is vigilance to defend it, and activity to dispose of it, and truth to account for it, and all those trusty virtues which ennoble the character of man to shield it from injury, and send it back again in an increasing tide of opulence to his door.

There is no question, then as to the fact of a very extended practical honesty, between man and man, in their intercourse with each other. The only question is, as to the reason of the fact. Why is it, that he whom you have trusted acquits himself of his trust with such correctness and fidelity? Whether is his mind, in so doing, most set upon your interest or upon his own? Whether is it because he seeks your advantage in it, or because he finds in it his own advantage? Tell us to which of the two concerns he is most tremblingly alive—to your property, or to his own character? and whether, upon the last of these feelings, he may not be more forcibly impelled to equitable dealing than upon the first of them? We well know, that there is room enough in his bosom for both; but to determine how powerfully selfishness is blended with the punctualities and the integrities of business, let us ask those who can speak most soundly and experimentally on the subject, what would be the result, if the element of selfishness were so detached from the operations of trade, that there was no such thing as a man suffering in his prosperity, because he suffered in his good name; that there was no such thing as a desertion of custom and employment coming upon the back of a blasted credit, and a tainted reputation; in a word, if the only security we had of man was his principles, and that his interest flourished and augmented just as surely without his principles as with them? Tell us, if the hold we have of a man's own personal advantage were thus broken down, in how far the virtues of the mercantile world would survive it? Would not the world of trade sustain as violent a derangement on this mighty hold being cut asunder, as the world of nature would on the suspending of the law of gravitation? Would not the whole system, in fact fall to pieces, and be dissolved? Would not men, when thus released from the magical chain of their own interest, which bound them together into a fair and seeming compact of principle, like dogs of rapine let loose upon their prey, overleap the barrier which formerly restrained them? Does not this prove, that selfishness, after all, is the grand principle on which the brotherhood of the human race is made to hang together; and that he who can make the wrath of man to praise him, has also, upon the sel-

fishness of man, caused a most beauteous order of wide and useful intercourse to be suspended?

But let us here stop to observe, that, while there is much in this contemplation to magnify the wisdom of the Supreme Contriver, there is also much in it to humble man, and to convict him of the deceitfulness of that moral complacency with which he looks to his own character, and his own attainments. There is much in it to demonstrate, that his righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and that the idolatry of self, however hidden in its operation, may be detected in almost every one of them. God may combine the separate interests of every individual of the human race, and the strenuous prosecution of these interests by each of them, into a harmonious system of operation, for the good of one great and extended family. But if, on estimating the character of each individual member of that family, we shall find that the mainspring of his actions is the urgency of a selfish inclination; and that to this his very virtues are subordinate: and that even the honesties which mark his conduct are chiefly, though, perhaps, insensibly due to the selfishness which actuates and occupies his whole heart;—then, let the semblance be what it may, still the reality of the case accords with the most mortifying representations of the New Testament. The moralities of nature are but the moralities of a day, and will cease to be applauded when this world, the only theatre of their applause, is burnt up. They are but the blossoms of that rank efflorescence which is nourished on the soil of human corruption, and can never bring forth fruit unto immortality. The discerner of all secrets sees that they emanate from a principle which is at utter war with the charity that prepares for the enjoyments, and that glows in the bosoms of the celestial; and, therefore, though highly esteemed among men, they may be in His sight an abomination.

Let us, if possible, make this still clearer to your apprehension, by descending more minutely into particulars. There is not one member of the great mercantile family, with whom there does not obtain a reciprocal interest between himself and all those who compose the circle of his various correspondents. He does them good; but his eye is all the while open to the ex-

pectation of their doing him something again. They minister to him all the profits of his employment; but not unless he minister to them of his service, and attention, and fidelity. Insomuch, that if his credit abandon him, his prosperity will also abandon him. If he forfeit the confidence of others, he will also forfeit their custom along with it. So that, in perfect consistency with interest being the reigning idol of his soul, he may still be, in every way, as sensitive of encroachment upon his reputation, as he would be of encroachment upon his property; and be as vigilant, to the full, in guarding his name against the breath of calumny, or suspicion, as in guarding his estate against the inroads of a depredator. Now, this tie of reciprocity, which binds him into fellowship and good faith with society at large, will some times, in the mere course of business, and its unlooked-for fluctuations, draw one or two individuals into a still more special intimacy with himself. There may be a lucrative partnership, in which it is the pressing necessity of each individual, that all of them, for a time at least, stick closely and steadily together. Or there may be a thriving interchange of commodities struck out, where it is the mutual interest of all who are concerned, that each take his assigned part and adhere to it. Or there may be a promising arrangement devised, which it needs concert and understanding to effectuate; and, for which purpose, several may enter into a skilful and well ordered combination.

We are neither saying that this is very general in the mercantile world, or that it is in the slightest degree unfair. But you must be sensible, that, amid the reelings and movements of the great trading society, the phenomenon sometimes offers itself of a groupe of individuals who have entered into some compact of mutual accommodation, and who, therefore, look as if they were isolated from the rest by the bond of some more strict and separate alliance. All we aim at, is to gather illustration to our principle, out of the way in which the members of this associated cluster conduct themselves to each other; how such a cordiality may pass between them, as, one could suppose to be the cordiality of genuine friendship; how such an intercourse might be maintained among their families, as might

look like the intercourse of unmingled affection; how such an exuberance of mutual hospitality might be poured forth as to recal those poetic days when avarice was unknown, and men lived in harmony together on the fruits of one common inheritance; and how nobly disdainful each member of the combination appeared to be of such little savings, as could be easily surrendered to the general good and adjustment of the whole concern. And all this, you will observe, so long as the concern prospered, and it was for the interest of each to abide by it; and the respective accounts current gladdened the heart of every individual, by the exhibition of an abundant share of the common benefit to himself. But then, every such system of operations comes to an end. And what we ask is, if it be at all an unlikely evolution of our nature, that the selfishness which lay in wrapt concealment, during the progress of these transactions, should now come forward and put out to view its cloven foot, when they draw to their termination? And as the tie of reciprocity gets looser, is it not a very possible thing, that the murmurs of something like unfair or unhandsome conduct should get louder? And that a fellowship, hitherto carried forward in smiles, should break up in reproaches? And that the whole character of this fellowship should show itself more unequivocally as it comes nearer to its close? And that some of its members, as they are becoming disengaged from the bond of mutual interest, should also become disengaged from the bond of those mutual delicacies and proprieties, and even honesties, which had heretofore marked the whole of their intercourse?—Insomuch, that a matter in which all the parties looked so fair, and magnanimous, and liberal, might at length degenerate into a contest of keen appropriation, a scramble of downright and undisguised selfishness?

But though this may happen sometimes, we are far from saying that it will happen generally. It could not, in fact, without such an exposure of character, as might not merely bring a man down in the estimation of those from whom he is now withdrawing himself, but also in the estimation of that general public with whom he is still linked; and on whose opinion of him there still rests the dependence of a strong personal interest.

To estimate precisely the whole influence of this consideration, or the degree in which honesty of character is resolvable into selfishness of character, it would be necessary to suppose, that the tie of reciprocity was dissolved, not merely between the individual and those with whom he had been more particularly and more intimately associated—but that the tie of reciprocity was dissolved between the individual and the whole of his former acquaintanceship in business.

Now, the situation which comes nearest to this, is that of a man on the eve of bankruptcy, and with no sure hope of so retrieving his circumstances as again to emerge into credit, and be restored to some employment of gain or of confidence. If he have either honourable or religious feelings, then character, as connected with principle may still, in his eyes, be something; but character, as connected with prudence, or the calculations of interest, may now be nothing. In the dark hour of the desperation of his soul, he may feel, in fact, that he has nothing to lose; and let us now see how he will conduct himself, when thus released from that check of reputation which formerly held him. In these circumstances, if you have ever seen the man abandon himself to utter regardlessness of all the honesties which at one time adorned him, and doing such disgraceful things as he would have spurned at the very suggestion of, in the days of his prosperity; and, forgetful of his former name, practising all possible shifts of duplicity to prolong the credit of a tottering establishment; and to keep himself afloat for a few months of torture and restlessness, weaving such a web of entanglement around his many friends and companions, as shall most surely implicate some of them in his fall; and, as the crisis approaches, plying his petty wiles how to survive the coming ruin, and to gather up of its fragments to his family. O! how much is there here to deplore; and who can be so ungenerous as to stalk in unrelenting triumph over the helplessness of so sad an overthrow! But if ever such an exhibition meet your eye, while we ask you not to withhold your pity from the unfortunate, we ask you also to read in it a lesson of worthless and sunken humanity; how even its very virtues are tinctured with corruption; and that the honour, and the

truth and the equity, with which man proudly thinks his nature to be embellished, are often reared on the basis of selfishness, and lie prostrate in the dust when that basis is cut away.

But other instances may be quoted, which go still more satisfactorily to prove the very extended influence of selfishness on the moral judgments of our species; and how readily the estimate, which a man forms on the question of right and wrong, accommodates itself to his own interest. There is a strong general reciprocity of advantage between the government of a country and all its inhabitants. The one party, in this relation, renders a revenue for the expenses of the state. The other party renders back again protection from injustice and violence. Were the means furnished by the former withheld, the benefit conferred by the latter would cease to be administered. So that, with the government, and the public at large, nothing can be more strict, and more indispensable, than the tie of reciprocity that is between them. But this is not felt, and therefore not acted upon by the separate individuals who compose that public. The reciprocity does not come home with a sufficiently pointed and personal application to each of them. Every man may calculate, that though he, on the strength of some dexterous evasions, were to keep back of the tribute that is due by him, the mischief that would recoil upon himself is divided with the rest of his countrymen; and the portion of it which comes to his door would be so very small, as to be altogether insensible. To all feeling he will just be as effectually sheltered, by the power and the justice of his country, whether he pay his taxes in full, or under the guise of some skilful concealment, pay them but partially; and therefore, to every practical effect, the tie of reciprocity, between him and his sovereign, is in a great measure dissolved. Now, what is the actual adjustment of the moral sense, and moral conduct, of the population, to this state of matters? It is quite palpable. Subterfuges, which in private business, would be held to be disgraceful, are not held to be so disgraceful in this department of a man's personal transactions. The cry of indignation, which would be lifted up against the falsehood or dishonesty of a man's dealings in his own neighbourhood, is mitigated or unheard, though, in his

dealings with the state, there should be the very same relaxation of principle. On this subject, there is a convenience of popular feeling, which, if extended to the whole of human traffic, would banish all its securities from the world. Giving reason to believe, that much of the good done among men, is done on the expectation of a good that will be rendered back again; and that many of the virtues, by which the fellowship of human beings is regulated and sustained, still leave the imputation unredeemed, of its being a fellowship of sinners; and that both the practice of morality, and the demand for it, are measured by the operation of a self-love, which, so far from signalizing any man, or preparing him for eternity, he holds in common with the fiercest and most degenerate of his species; and that, apart from the consideration of his own interest, simplicity and godly sincerity are, to a great degree, unknown; insomuch, that, though God has interposed with a law, of giving unto all their dues, and tribute to whom tribute is due—we may venture an affirmation of the vast majority of this tribute, that it is rendered for wrath's sake, and not for conscience's sake. Of so little effect is unsupported and solitary conscience to stem the tide of selfishness. And it is chiefly when honesty and truth go overbearingly along with this tide, that the voice of man is lifted up to acknowledge them, and his heart becomes feelingly alive to a sense of their obligations.

And let us here just ask, in what relation of criminality does he who uses a contraband article stand to him who deals in it? In precisely the same relation that a receiver of stolen goods stands to a thief or a depredator. There may be some who revolt at the idea of being so classified. But, if the habit we have just denounced can be fastened on men of rank and seemly reputation, let us just humble ourselves into the admission of how little the righteous practice of the world has the foundation of righteous principle to sustain it; how feeble are the securities of rectitude, had it nothing to uphold it but its own native charms, and native obligations; how society is held together, only because the grace of God can turn to account the worthless propensities of the individuals who compose it; and how, if the virtues of fidelity, and truth, and justice, had not

the prop of selfishness to rest upon, they would, with the exception of a few scattered remnants, take their departure from the world, and leave it a prey to the anarchy of human passions—to the wild misrule of all those depravities which agitate and deform our ruined nature.

The very same exhibition of our nature may be witnessed in almost every parish of our sister kingdom, where the people render a revenue to the minister of religion, and the minister renders back again a return, it is true—but not such a return, as, in the estimation of gross and ordinary selfishness, is at all deemed an equivalent for the sacrifice which has been made. In this instance, too, that law of reciprocity which reigns throughout the common transactions of merchandise, is altogether suspended; and the consequence is, that the law of right is trampled into ashes. A tide of public odium runs against the men who are outraged of their property, and a smile of general connivance rewards the successful dexterity of the men who invade it. That portion of the annual produce of our soil, which, on a foundation of legitimacy as firm as the property of the soil itself, is allotted to a set of national functionaries—and which, but for them, would all have gone, in the shape of increased revenue, to the indolent proprietor, is altogether thrown loose from the guardianship of that great principle of reciprocity, on which we strongly suspect that the honesties of this world are mainly supported. The national clergy of England may be considered as standing out of the pale of this guardianship; and the consequence is, that what is most rightfully and most sacredly theirs, is abandoned to the gambol of many thousand depredators; and in addition to a load of most unmerited obloquy, have they had to sustain all the heartburnings of known and felt injustice; and that intercourse between the teachers and the taught, which ought surely to be an intercourse of peace, and friendship, and righteousness, is turned into a contest between the natural avarice of the one party, and the natural resentments of the other. It is not that we wish our sister church were swept away, for we honestly think, that the overthrow of that establishment would be a severe blow to the Christianity of our land. It is not that we envy that great hierarchy the splendor of her en-

dowments—for better a dinner of herbs, when surrounded by the love of parishioners, than a preferment of stalled dignity, and strife therewith. It is not either that we look upon her ministers as having at all disgraced themselves by their rapacity; for look to the amount of the encroachments that are made upon them, and you will see that they have carried their privileges with the most exemplary forbearance and moderation. But from these very encroachments do we infer how lawless a human being will become, when emancipated from the bond of his own interest; how much such a state of things must multiply the temptations to injustice over the face of the country; and how desirable, therefore, that it were put an end to—not by the abolition of that venerable church, but by a fair and liberal commutation of the revenues which support her—not by bringing any blight on the property of her ecclesiastics, but by the removal of a most devouring blight from the worth of her population—that every provocative to justice may be done away, and the frailty of human principle be no longer left to such a ruinous and such a withering exposure.

This instance we would not have mentioned, but for the sake of adding another experimental proof to the lesson of our text; and we now hasten onward to the lesson itself, with a few of its applications.

We trust you are convinced, from what has been said, that much of the actual honesty of the world is due to the selfishness of the world. And then you will surely admit, that in as far as this is the actuating principle, honesty descends from its place as a rewardable, or even as an amiable virtue, and sinks down into the character of a mere prudential virtue—which, so far from conferring any moral exaltation on him by whom it is exemplified, emanates out of a propensity that seems inseparable from the constitution of every sentient being—and by which man is, in one point, assimilated either to the most worthless of his own species, or to those inferior animals among whom worth is unattainable.

And let it not deafen the humbling impression of this argument, that you are not distinctly conscious of the operation of selfishness, as presiding at every step over the honesty of your

daily and familiar transactions ; and that the only inward checks against injustice, of which you are sensible, are the aversion of a generous indignancy towards it, and the positive discomfort you would incur by the reproaches of your own conscience. Selfishness, in fact, may have originated and alimented the whole of this virtue that belongs to you, and yet the mind incur the same discomfort by the violation of it, that it would do by the violation of any other of its established habits. And as to the generous indignancy of your feelings against all that is fraudulently and disgracefully wrong, let us never forget, that this may be the nurtured fruit of that common selfishness which links human beings with each other into a relationship of mutual dependence. This may be seen, in all its perfection, among the leagued and sworn banditti of the highway ; who, while execrated by society at large for the compact of iniquity into which they have entered can maintain the most heroic fidelity to the virtues of their own brotherhood—and be, in every way as lofty and as chivalric with their points of honour, as we are with ours ; and elevate as indignant a voice against the worthlessness of him who could betray the secret of their association, or break up any of the securities by which it was held together. And, in like manner, may we be the members of a wider combination, yet brought together by the tie of reciprocal interest ; and all the virtues essential to the existence, or to the good of such a combination, may come to be idolized amongst us ; and the breath of human applause may fan them into a lustre of splendid estimation ; and yet the good man of society on earth be, in common with all his fellows, an utter outcast from the society of heaven—with his heart altogether bereft of that allegiance to God which forms the reigning principle of his unfallen creation—and in a state of entire destitution either as to that love of the Supreme Being, or as to that disinterested love of those around us, which form the graces and the virtues of eternity.

We have not affirmed that there is no such thing as a native and disinterested principle of honour among men. But we have affirmed, on a former occasion, that a sense of honour may be in the heart, and the sense of God be utterly away from it. And

we affirm now, that much of the honest practice of the world is not due to honesty of principle at all, but takes its origin from a baser ingredient of our constitution altogether. How wide is the operation of selfishness on the one hand, and how limited is the operation of abstract principle on the other, it were difficult to determine; and such a labyrinth to man in his own heart, that he may be utterly unable, from his own consciousness, to answer this question. But amid all the difficulties of such an analysis to himself, we ask him to think of another who is unseen by us, but who is represented to us as seeing all things.—We know not in what characters this heavenly witness can be more impressively set forth, than as pondering the heart, as weighing the secrets of the heart, as fastening an attentive and a judging eye on all the movements of it, as treasuring up the whole of man's outward and inward history in a book of remembrance; and as keeping it in reserve for that day when, it is said, that the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open; and God shall bring out every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Your consciousness may not distinctly inform you, in how far the integrity of your habits is due to the latent operation of selfishness, or to the more direct and obvious operation of honour. But your consciousness may, perhaps, inform you distinctly enough, how little a share the will of God has in the way of influence on any of your doings. Your own sense and memory of what passes within you may charge you with the truth of this monstrous indictment—that you live without God in the world; that however you may be signalized among your fellows, by that worth of character which is held in highest value and demand amongst the individuals of a mercantile society, it is at least without the influence of a godly principle that you have reached the maturity of an established reputation; that either the proud emotions of rectitude which glow within your bosom are totally untinctured by a feeling of homage to the Deity—or that, without any such emotions, Self is the divinity you have all along worshipped, and your very virtues are so many offerings of reverence at her shrine. If such be, in fact, the nakedness of your spiritual condition, is it not high time, we ask, that you awaken out of this delusion, and

shake the lying spirit of deep and heavy slumber away from you? Is it not high time, when eternity is so fast coming on, that you examine your accounts with God, and seek for a settlement with that Being who will so soon meet your disembodied spirits with the question of—what have you done unto me?—And if all the virtues which adorn you are but the subserviences of time, and of its accommodation—if either done altogether unto yourselves, or done without the recognition of God on the spontaneous instigation of your own feelings—is it not high time that you lean no longer to the securities on which you have rested, and that you seek for acceptance with your Maker on a more firm and unalterable foundation?

This then is the terminating object of all the experience that we have tried to set before you. We want it to be a schoolmaster to bring you unto Christ. We want you to open your eyes to the accordancy which obtains between the theology of the New-Testament and the actual state and history of man. Above all, we want you to turn your eyes inwardly upon yourselves, and there to behold a character without one trace or lineament of godliness—there to behold a heart set upon totally other things than those which constitute the portion and the reward of eternity—there to behold every principle of action resolvable into the idolatry of self, or, at least into something independent of the authority of God—there to behold how worthless in their substance are those virtues which look so imposing in their semblance and their display, and draw round them here a popularity and an applause which will all be dissipated into nothing, when hereafter they are brought up for examination to the judgment seat. We want you, when the revelation of the gospel charges you with the totality and magnitude of your corruption, that you acquiesce in that charge; and that you may perceive the trueness of it, under the disguise of all those hollow and unsubstantial accomplishments, with which nature may deck her own fallen and degenerate children. It is easy to be amused, and interested, and intellectually regaled by an analysis of the human character, and a survey of human society. But it is not so easy to reach the individual conscience with the lesson—we are undone. It is not so easy to strike the

alarm into your hearts of the present guilt, and the future damnation. It is not so easy to send the pointed arrow of conviction into your bosoms, where it may keep by you and pursue you like an arrow sticking fast; or so to humble you into the conclusion, that in the sight of God, you are an accursed thing, as that you may seek unto him who became a curse for you, and as that the preaching of his Cross might cease to be foolishness.

Be assured, then, if you keep by the ground of being justified by your present works, you will perish: and though we may not have succeeded in convincing you of their worthlessness, be assured, that a day is coming when such a flaw of deceitfulness, in the principle of them all, shall be laid open as will demonstrate the equity of your entire and everlasting condemnation. To avert the fearfulness of that day is the message of the great atonement sounded in your ears—and the blood of Christ, cleansing from all sin, is offered to your acceptance; and if you turn away from it, you add to the guilt of a broken law the insult of a neglected gospel. But if you take the pardon of the gospel on the footing of the gospel, then, such is the efficacy of this great expedient, that it will reach an application of mercy farther than the eye of your own conscience ever reached; that it will redeem you from the guilt even of your most secret and unsuspected iniquities; and thouroughly wash you from a taint of sinfulness, more inveterate than, in the blindness of nature, you ever thought of, or ever conceived to belong to you.

But when a man becomes a believer, there are two great events which take place at this great turning point in his history. One of them takes place in heaven—even the expunging of his name from the book of condemnation. Another of them takes place on earth—even the application of such a sanctifying influence to his person, that all old things are done away with him, and all things become new with him. He is made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. He is not merely forgiven the sin of every one evil work of which he had aforetime been guilty, but he is created anew unto the corresponding good work. And therefore, if a Christian, will his honesty be purifi-

ed from that taint of selfishness by which the general honesty of this world is so deeply and extensively pervaded. He will not do this good thing, that any good thing may be done unto him again. He will do it on a simple regard to its own native and independent rectitude. He will do it because it is honourable, and because God wills him so to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour. All his fair dealing, and all his friendship, will be fair dealing and friendship without interest. The principle that is in him will stand in no need of aid from any such auxiliary—but strong in its own unborrowed resources, will it impress a legible stamp of dignity and uprightness on the whole variety of his transactions in the world. All men find it their advantage, by the integrity of their dealings, to prolong the existence of some gainful fellowship into which they may have entered. But with him, the same unsullied integrity which kept this fellowship together, and sustained the progress of it, will abide with him through its last transactions, and dignify its full and final termination. Most men find, that, without the reverberation of any mischief on their own heads, they could reduce beneath the point of absolute justice, the charges of taxation. But he has a conscience both towards God, and towards man, which will not let him; and there is a rigid truth in all his returns, a pointed and precise accuracy in all his payments. When hemmed in with circumstances of difficulty, and evidently tottering to his fall, the demand of nature is, that he should ply his every artifice to secrete a provision for his family. But a Christian mind is incapable of artifice; and the voice of conscience within him will ever be louder than the voice of necessity; and he will be open as day with his creditors, nor put forth his hand to that which is rightfully theirs, any more than he would put forth his hand to the perpetration of a sacrilege; and though released altogether from that tie of interest which binds a man to equity with his fellows, yet the tie of principle will remain with him in all its strength. Nor will it ever be found that he, for the sake of subsistence, will enter into fraud, seeing that, as one of the children of light, he would not, to gain the whole world, lose his own soul.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE GUILT OF DISHONESTY NOT TO BE ESTIMATED BY THE GAIN OF IT.

LUKE xvi. 10.

He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much.

It is the fine poetical conception of a late poetical countryman, whose fancy too often grovelled among the despicable of human character—but who, at the same time, was capable of exhibiting, either in pleasing or in proud array, both the tender and the noble of human character—when he says of the man who carried a native unborrowed self-sustained rectitude in his bosom, that "his eye, even turned on empty space, beamed keen with honour." It was affirmed, in the last discourse, that much of the honourable practice of the world rested on the substratum of selfishness; that society was held together in the exercise of its relative virtues, mainly, by the tie of reciprocal advantage; that a man's own interest bound him to all those average equities which obtained in the neighbourhood around him; and in which, if he proved himself to be glaringly deficient, he would be abandoned by the respect, and the confidence, and the good will, of the people with whom he had to do. It is a melancholy thought, how little the semblance of virtue upon earth betokens the real and substantial presence of virtuous principle among men. But on the other hand, though it be a rare, there cannot be a more dignified attitude of the soul, than when of itself it kindles with a sense of justice, and the holy flame is fed, as it were, by its own energies; than when man moves onwards in an unchanging course of moral

magnanimity, and disdains the aid of those inferior principles, by which gross and sordid humanity, is kept from all the grosser violations; than when he rejoices in truth as his kindred and congenial element;—so, that though unpeopled of all its terrestrial accompaniments; though he saw no interest whatever to be associated with its fulfilment; though without one prospect either of fame or of emolument before him, would his eye, even when turned on emptiness itself, still retain the living lustre that had been lighted up in it, by a feeling of inward and independent reverence.

It has already been observed, and that fully, and frequently enough, that a great part of the homage which is rendered to integrity in the world, is due to the operation of selfishness. And this substantially is the reason, why the principle of the text has so very slender a hold upon the human conscience. Man is ever prone to estimate the enormity of injustice, by the degree in which he suffers from it. He brings this moral question to the standard of his own interest. A master will bear with all the lesser liberties of his servants, so long as he feels them to be harmless; and it is not till he is awakened to the apprehension of personal injury from the amount or frequency of the embezzlements, that his moral indignation is at all sensibly awakened. And thus it is, that the maxim of our great teacher of righteousness seems to be very much unfelt, or forgotten, in society. Unfaithfulness in that which is little, and unfaithfulness in that which is much, are very far from being regarded, as they were by him under the same aspect of criminality. If there be no great hurt, it is felt that there is no great harm. The innocence of a dishonest freedom in respect of morality, is rated by its insignificance in respect of matter. The margin which separates the right from the wrong is remorselessly trodden under foot, so long as each makes only a minute and gentle encroachment beyond the land-mark of his neighbour's territory. On this subject there is a loose and popular estimate, which is not at one with the deliverance of the New Testament; a habit of petty invasion on the side of aggressors, which is scarcely felt by them to be at all iniquitous —and even on the part of those who are thus made free with

there is a habit of loose and careless toleration. There is, in fact, a negligence or a dormancy of principle among men, which causes this sort of injustice to be easily practised on the one side, and as easily put up with on the other; and, in a general slackness of observation, is this virtue, in its strictness and in its delicacy, completely overborne.

It is the taint of selfishness, then, which has so marred and corrupted the moral sensibility of our world; and the man, if such a man can be, whose "eye, even turned on empty space, beams keen with honour;" and whose homage, therefore, to the virtue of justice, is altogether freed from the mixture of unworthy and interested feelings, will long to render to her, in every instance, a faultless and a completed offering. Whatever his forbearance to others, he could not suffer the slightest blot of corruption upon any doings of his own. He cannot be satisfied with any thing short of the very last jot and tittle of the requirements of equity being fulfilled. He not merely shares in the revolt of the general world against such outrageous departures from the rule of right, as would carry in their train the ruin of acquaintances or the distress of families. Such is the delicacy of the principle within him, that he could not have peace under the consciousness even of the minutest and least discoverable violation. He looks fully and fearlessly at the whole account which justice has against him; and he cannot rest, so long as there is a single article unmet, or a single demand unsatisfied. If, in any transaction of his there was so much as a farthing of secret and injurious reservation on his side, this would be to him like an accursed thing, which marred the character of the whole proceeding, and spread over it such an aspect of evil, as to offend and to disturb him. He could not bear the whisperings of his own heart, if it told him, that, in so much as by one iota of defect, he had balanced the matter unfairly between himself and the unconscious individual with whom he deals. It would lie a burden upon his mind to hurt and to make him unhappy, till the opportunity of explanation had come round, and he had obtained ease to his conscience, by acquitting himself to the full of all his obligations. It is justice in the uprightness of her attitude; it is justice in the onwardness of her

path; it is justice disdaining every advantage that would tempt her, by ever so little to the right or to the left; it is justice spurning the littleness of each paltry enticement away from her, and maintaining herself, without deviation, in a track so purely rectilinear, that even the most jealous and microscopic eye could not find in it the slightest aberration: this is the justice set forth by our great moral Teacher in the passage now submitted to you; and by which we are told, that this virtue refuses fellowship with every degree of iniquity that is perceptible; and that, were the very least act of unfaithfulness admitted, she would feel as if in her sanctity she had been violated, as if in her character she had sustained an overthrow.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let us first attempt to elucidate the principle of our text, and then urge onward to its practical consequences—both as it respects our general relation to God, and as it respects the particular lesson of faithfulness that may be educed from it.

I. The great principle of the text is, that he who has sinned though to a small amount in respect of the fruit of his transgression—provided he has done so, by passing over a forbidden limit which was distinctly known to him, has in the act of doing so, incurred a full condemnation in respect of the principle of his transgression. In one word, that the gain of it may be small, while the guilt of it may be great; that the latter ought not to be measured by the former; but that he who is unfaithful in the least, shall be dealt with in respect of the offence he has given to God, in the same way as if he had been unfaithful in much.

The first reason, which we would assign in vindication of this is, that by a small act of injustice, the line which separates the right from the wrong is just as effectually broken over as by a great act of injustice. There is a tendency in gross and corporeal man to rate the criminality of injustice by the amount of its appropriations—to reduce it to a computation of weight and of measure—to count the man who has gained a double sum by his dishonesty, to be doubly more dishonest than his neighbour—to make it an affair of product rather than of principle; and thus to weigh the morality of a character in the same arithme-

tical balance with number or with magnitude. Now, this is not the rule of calculation on which our Saviour has proceeded in the text. He speaks to the man who is only half an inch within the limit of forbidden ground, in the very same terms by which he addresses the man who has made the furthest and the largest incursions upon it. It is true, that he is only a little way upon the wrong side of the line of demarcation. But why is he upon it at all? It was in the act of crossing that line, and not in the act of going onwards after he had crossed it—it was then that the contest between right and wrong was entered upon, and then it was decided. That was the instant of time at which principle struck her surrender. The great pull which the man had to make, was in the act of overleaping the fence of separation; and after that was done, justice had no other barrier by which to obstruct his progress over the whole extent of the field which she had interdicted. There might be barriers of a different description. There might be still a revolting of humanity against the sufferings that would be inflicted by an act of larger fraud or depredation. There might be a dread of exposure, if the dishonesty should so swell, in point of amount, as to become more noticeable. There might, after the absolute limit between justice and injustice is broken, be another limit against the extending of a man's encroachments, in a terror of discovery, or in a sense of interest, or even in the relentings of a kindly or a compunctious feeling towards him who is the victim of injustice. But this is not the limit with which the question of a man's truth, or a man's honesty, has to do. These have already been given up. He may only be a little way within the margin of the unlawful territory, but still he is upon it; and the God who finds him there will reckon with him, and deal with him accordingly. Other principles and other considerations, may restrain his progress to the very heart of the territory, but justice is not one of them. This he deliberately flung away from him, at that moment when he passed the line of circumvallation; and, though in the neighbourhood of that line, he may hover all his days at the petty work of picking and purloining such fragments as he meets with, though he may never venture himself to a place of more daring or distin-

guished atrocity, God sees of him, that, in respect of the principle of justice, at least, there is an utter unhingement. And thus it is that the Saviour, who knew what was in man, and who, therefore, knew all the springs of that moral machinery by which he is actuated, pronounces of him who was unfaithful in the least, that he was unfaithful also in much.

After the transition is accomplished, the progress will follow of course, just as opportunity invites, and just as circumstances make it safe and practicable. For it is not with justice as it is with generosity, and some of the other virtues. There is not the same graduation in the former as there is in the latter. The man who, other circumstances being equal, gives away a double sum in charity, may, with more propriety, be reckoned doubly more generous than his neighbour; than the man who, with the same equality of circumstances, only ventures on half the extent of fraudulency, can be reckoned only one half as unjust as his neighbour. Each has broken a clear line of demarcation. Each has transgressed a distinct and visible limit which he knew to be forbidden. Each has knowingly forced a passage beyond his neigbour's land-mark—and that is the place where justice has laid the main force of her interdict. As it respects the *materiel* of injustice, the question revolves itself into a mere computation of quantity. As it respects the *morale* of injustice, the computation is upon other principles. It is upon the latter that our Saviour pronounces himself. And he gives us to understand, that a very humble degree of the former may indicate the latter in all its atrocity. He stands on the breach between the lawful and the unlawful; and he tells us, that the man who enters by a single footstep on the forbidden ground, immediately gathers upon his person the full hue and character of guiltiness. He admits no extenuation of the lesser acts of dishonesty. He does not make right pass into wrong, by a gradual melting of the one into the other. He does not thus obliterate the distinctions of morality. There is no shading off at the margin of guilt, but a clear and vigorous delineation. It is not by a gentle transition that a man steps over from honesty to dishonesty. There is between them a wall rising up unto heaven; and the high authority of heaven must be stormed ere one inch of en-

trance can be made into the region of iniquity. The morality of the Saviour never leads him to gloss over the beginnings of crime. His object ever is, as in the text before us, to fortify the limit, to cast a rampart of exclusion around the whole territory of guilt, and to rear it before the eye of man in such characters of strength and sacredness, as should make them feel that it is impregnable.

The second reason, why he who is unfaithful in the least has incurred the condemnation of him who is unfaithful in much, is, that the littleness of the gain, so far from giving a littleness to the guilt, is in fact a circumstance of aggravation. There is just this difference. He who has committed injustice for the sake of a less advantage, has done it on the impulse of a less temptation. He has parted with his honesty at an inferior price; and this circumstance may go so to equalize the estimate, as to bring it very much to one with the deliverance, in the text, of our great Teacher of righteousness. The limitation between good and evil stood as distinctly before the notice of the small as of the great depredator; and he has just made as direct a contravention to the first reason, when he passed over upon the wrong side of it. And he may have made little of gain by the enterprise, but this does not allay the guilt of it. Nay, by the second reason, this may serve to aggravate the wrath of the Divinity against him. It proves how small the price is which he sets upon his eternity, and how cheaply he can bargain the favour of God away from him, and how low he rates the good of an inheritance with him, and for what a trifle he can dispose of all interest in his kingdom and in his promises. The very circumstance which gives to his character a milder transgression in the eyes of the world, makes it more odious in the judgment of the sanctuary. The more paltry it is in respect of profit, the more profane it may be in respect of principle. It likens him the more to profane Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. And thus it is, indeed, most woful to think of such a senseless and alienated world; and how heedlessly the men of it are posting their infatuated way to destruction; and how, for as little gain as might serve them a day, they are contracting as much guilt as will ruin them for

ever; and are profoundly asleep in the midst of such designs and such doings, as will form the valid materials of their entire and everlasting condemnation.

It is with argument such as this that we would try to strike conviction among a very numerous class of offenders in society —those who, in the various departments of trust, or service, or agency, are ever practising, in littles, at the work of secret appropriation—those whose hands are in a state of constant defilement, by the putting of them forth to that which they ought to touch not, and taste not, and handle not—those who silently number such pilferments as can pass unnoticed among the perquisites of their office; and who, by an excess in their charges, just so slight as to escape detection—or by a habit of purloining, just so restrained as to elude discovery, have both a conscience very much at ease in their own bosoms, and a credit very fair, and very entire, among their acquaintances around them. They grossly count upon the smallness of their transgression. But they are just going in a small way to hell. They would recoil with violent dislike from the act of a midnight depredator. It is just because terrors, and trials, and executions, have thrown around it the pomp and the circumstance of guilt. But at another bar, and on a day of more dreadful solemnity, their guilt will be made to stand out in its essential characters, and their condemnation will be pronounced from the lips of Him who judgeth righteously. They feel that they have incurred no outrageous forfeiture of character among men, and this instills a treacherous complacency into their own hearts. But the piercing eye of Him who looketh down from heaven is upon the reality of the question; and He who ponders the secrets of every bosom, can perceive, that the man who recoils only from such a degree of injustice as is notorious, may have no justice whatever in his character. He may have a sense of reputation. He may have the fear of detection and disgrace. He may feel a revolt in his constitution against the magnitude of a gross and glaring violation. He may even share in all the feelings and principles of that conventional kind of morality which obtains in his neighbourhood. But, of that principle which is surrendered by the least act of

unfaithfulness, he has no share whatever. He perceives no overawing sacredness in that boundary which separates the right from the wrong. If he only keep decently near, it is a matter of indifference to him whether he be on this or on that side of it. He can be unfaithful in that which is least. There may be other principles, and other considerations to restrain him; but certain it is, that it is not now the principle of justice which restrains him from being unfaithful in much.—This is given up; and, through a blindness to the great and important principle of our text, this virtue may, in its essential character, be as good as banished from the world. All its protections may be utterly overthrown. The line of defence is effaced by which it ought to have been firmly and scrupulously guarded. The sign-posts of intimation, which ought to warn and to scare away, are planted along the barrier; and when, in defiance to them, the barrier is broken, man will not be checked by any sense of honesty, at least, from expatiating over the whole of the forbidden territory. And thus may we gather from the countless peccadilloes which are so current in the various departments of trade, and service, and agency—from the secret freedoms in which many do indulge, without one remonstrance from their own hearts—from the petty inroads that are daily practised on the confines of justice, by which its line of demarcation is trodden under foot, and it has lost the moral distinctness, and the moral charm, that should have kept it unviolate—from the exceeding multitude of such offences as are frivolous in respect of the matter of them, but most fearfully important in respect of the principle in which they originate—from the woful amount of that unseen and unrecorded guilt which escapes the cognizance of human law, but on the application of the touchstone in our text, may be made to stand out in characters of severest condemnation—from instances, too numerous to repeat, but certainly too obvious to be missed, even by the observation of charity, may we gather the frailty of human principle, and the virulence of that moral poison, which is now in such full circulation to taint and to adulterate the character of our species.

Before finishing this branch of our subject, we may observe,

that it is with this, as with many other phenomena of the human character, that we are not long in contemplation upon it, without coming in sight of that great characteristic of fallen man, which meets and forces itself upon us in every view that we take of him—even the great moral disease of ungodliness. It is at the precise limit between the right and the wrong that the flaming sword of God's law is placed. It is there that "Thus saith the Lord" presents itself, in legible characters, to our view. It is there where the operation of his commandment begins; and not at any of those higher gradations, where a man's dishonesty first appals himself by the chance of its detection, or appals others by the mischief and insecurity which it brings upon social life. An extensive fraud upon the revenue, for example, unpopular as this branch of justice is, would bring a man down from his place of eminence and credit in mercantile society. That petty fraud which is associated with so many of those smaller payments, where a lie in the written acknowledgment is both given and accepted, as a way of escape from the legal imposition, circulates at large among the members of the great trading community. In the former, and in all the greater cases of injustice, there is a human restraint, and a human terror, in operation. There is disgrace and civil punishment, to scare away. There are all the sanctions of that conventional morality which is suspended on the fear of man, and the opinion of man; and which, without so much as the recognition of a God, would naturally point its armor against every outrage that could sensibly disturb the securities and the rights of human society. But so long as the disturbance is not sensible—so long as the injustice keeps within the limits of smallness and secrecy—so long as it is safe for the individual to practise it, and, borne along on the tide of general example and connivance, he has nothing to restrain him but that distinct and inflexible word of God, which proscribes all unfaithfulness, and admits of it in no degrees, and no modifications—then, let the almost universal sleep of conscience attest, how little of God there is in the virtue of this world; and how much the peace and the protection of society are owing to such moralities, as the mere selfishness of man would lead him to ordain, even in a community of atheists.

II. Let us now attempt to unfold a few of the practical consequences that may be drawn from the principle of the text, both in respect to our general relation with God, and in respect to the particular lesson of faithfulness which may be educed from it.

I. There cannot be a stronger possible illustration of our argument, than the very first act of retribution that occurred in the history of our species. "And God said unto Adam, Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it. For in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. But the woman took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

What is it that invests the eating of a solitary apple with a grandeur so momentous? How came an action in itself so minute, to be the germ of such mighty consequences? How are we to understand that our first parents, by the doing of a single instant, not only brought death upon themselves, but shed this big and baleful disaster over all their posterity? We may not be able to answer all these questions, but we may at least learn, what a thing of danger it is, under the government of a holy and inflexible God, to tamper with the limits of obedience. By the eating of that apple a clear requirement was broken, and a distinct transition was made from loyalty to rebellion, and an entrance was effected into the region of sin—and thus did this one act serve like the opening of a gate for a torrent of mighty mischief; and if the act itself was a trifle, it just went to aggravate its guilt—that, for such a trifle, the authority of God could be despised and trampled on. At all events, his attribute of Truth stood committed to the fulfilment of the threatening; and the very insignificancy of the deed, which provoked the execution of it, gives a sublimer character to the certainty of the fulfilment. We know how much this trait, in the dealings of God with man, has been the jeer of infidelity. But in all this ridicule, there is truly nothing else than the grossness of materialism. Had Adam, instead of plucking one single apple from the forbidden tree, been armed with the power of a malignant spirit, and spread a wanton havoc over the face of paradise, and spoiled the garden of its loveliness, and been able to mar and to deform

the whole of that terrestrial creation over which God had so recently rejoiced—the punishment he sustained would have looked to these arithmetical moralists, a more adequate return for the offence of which he had been guilty. They cannot see how the moral lesson rises in greatness, just in proportion to the humility of the material accompaniments—and how it wraps a sublimer glory around the holiness of the Godhead—and how from the transaction, such as it is, the conclusion cometh forth more nakedly, and, therefore, more impressively, that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lawgiver. God said, "Let there be light, and it was light;" and it has ever been regarded as a sublime token of the Deity, that, from an utterance so simple an accomplishment so quick and so magnificent should have followed. God said, "That he who eateth of the tree in the midst of the garden should die." It appears indeed, but a little thing, that one should put forth his hand to an apple and taste of it. But a saying of God was involved in the matter—and heaven and earth must pass away, ere a saying of his can pass away; and so the apple became decisive of the fate of a world; and, out of the very scantiness of the occasion, did there emerge a sublimer display of truth and of holiness. The beginning of the world was, indeed, the period of great manifestations of the Godhead; and they all seem to accord, in style and character, with each other; and in that very history, which has called forth the profane and unthinking levity of many a scorner, may we behold as much of the majesty of principle, as in the creation of light, we behold of the majesty of power.

But this history furnishes the materials of a contemplation still more practical. If, for this one offence, Adam and his posterity have been so visited—if so rigorously and so inflexibly precise be the spirit of God's administration—if, under the economy of heaven, sin, even in the very humblest of its exhibitions, be the object of an intolerance so jealous and so unrelenting—if the Deity be such as this transaction manifests him to be, disdainful of fellowship even with the very least iniquity, and dreadful in the certainty of all his accomplishments against it—if, for a single transgression, all the promise and all the felicity of paradise had to be broken up, and the wretched offend-

ers had to be turned abroad upon a world, now changed by the curse into a wilderness, and their secure and lovely home of innocence behooved to be abandoned, and to keep them out, a flaming sword had to turn every way, and guard their reaccess to the bowers of immortality—if sin be so very hateful in the eye of unspotted holiness, that, on its very first act, and first appearance, the wonted communion between heaven and earth was interdicted—if that was the time at which God looked on our species with an altered countenance, and one deed of disobedience proved so terribly decisive of the fate and history of a world—what should each individual amongst us think of his own danger, whose life has been one continued habit of disobedience? If we be still in the hands of that God who laid so fell a condemnation on this one transgression, let us just think of our many transgressions, and that every hour we live multiplies the account of them; and that, however they may vanish from our own remembrance, they are still alive in the records of a judge whose eye and whose memory never fail him. Let us transfer the lesson we have gotten of heaven's jurisprudence from the case of our first parents to our own case. Let us compare our lives with the law of God, and we shall find that our sins are past reckoning. Let us take account of the habitual posture of our souls, as a posture of dislike for the things that are above, and we shall find that our thoughts and our desires are ever running in one current of sinfulness. Let us just make the computation how often we fail in the bidden charity, and the bidden godliness, and the bidden long suffering—all as clearly bidden as the duty that was laid on our first parents—and we shall find, that we are borne down under a mountain of iniquity; that, in the language of the Psalmist, our transgressions have gone over our heads, and, as a heavy burden, are too heavy for us; and if we be indeed under the government of Him who followed up the offence of the stolen apple by so dreadful a chastisement, then is wrath gone out unto the uttermost against every one of us.—There is something in the history of that apple which might be brought specially to bear on the case of those small sinners who practise in secret at the work of their petty depredations. But it also carries in it a great and a universal

moral. It tells us that no sin is small. It serves a general purpose of conviction. It holds out a most alarming disclosure of the charge that is against us; and makes it manifest to the conscience of him who is awakened thereby, that, unless God himself point out a way of escape, we are indeed most hopelessly sunk in condemnation. And, seeing that such wrath went out from the sanctuary of this unchangeable God, on the one offence of our first parents, it irresistibly follows, that if we, manifold in guilt, take not ourselves to his appointed way of reconciliation—if we refuse the overtures of Him, who then so visited the one offence through which all are dead, but is now laying before us all that free gift, which is of many offences unto justification—in other words, if we will not enter into peace through the offered Mediator, how much greater must be the wrath that abideth on us?

Now, let the sinner have his conscience schooled by such a contemplation, and there will be no rest whatever for his soul till he find it in the Saviour. Let him only learn, from the dealings of God with the first Adam, what a God of holiness he himself has to deal with; and let him further learn, from the history of the second Adam, that to manifest himself as a God of love, another righteousness had to be brought in, in place of that from which man had fallen so utterly away. There was a faultless obedience rendered by Him, of whom it is said, that he fulfilled all righteousness. There was a magnifying of the law by one in human form, who up to the last jot and tittle of it, acquitted himself of all its obligations. There was a pure, and lofty, and undefiled path, trodden by a holy and harmless Being, who gave not up his work upon earth, till ere he left it, he could cry out, that it was finished; and so had wrought out for us a perfect righteousness. Now, it forms the most prominent annunciation of the New Testament, that the reward of this righteousness is offered unto all—so that there is not one of us who is not put by the gospel upon the alternative of being either tried by our own merits, or treated according to the merits of Him who became sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Let the sinner just look unto himself, and look unto the Saviour. Let him

advert not to his one, but to his many offences; and that, too, in the sight of a God, who, but for one so slight and so insignificant in respect of the outward description, as the eating of a forbidden apple, threw off a world into banishment and entailed a sentence of death upon all its generations. Let him learn from this, that for sin, even in its humblest degrees, there exists in the bosom of the Godhead no toleration; and how shall he dare, with the degree and the frequency of his own sin, to stand any longer on a ground, where, if he remain, the fierceness of a consuming fire is so sure to overtake him? The righteousness of Christ is without a flaw, and there he is invited to take shelter. Under the actual regimen, which God has established in our world, it is indeed his only security—his refuge from the tempest, and hiding place from the storm. The only beloved Son offers to spread his own unspotted garment as a protection over him; and, if he be rightly alive to the utter nakedness of his moral and spiritual condition, he will indeed make no tarrying till he be found in Christ, and find that in him there is no condemnation.

Now, it is worthy of remark, that those principles, which shut a man up unto the faith, do not take flight and abandon him, after they have served this temporary purpose. They abide with him, and work their appropriate influence on his character, and serve as the germe of a new moral creation; and we can afterwards detect their operation in his heart and life; so, that if they were present at the formation of a saving belief, they are not less unfailingly present with every true Christian, throughout the whole of his future history, as the elements of a renovated conduct. If it was sensibility to the evil of sin which helped to wean the man from himself, and led him to his Saviour, this sensibility does not fall asleep in the bosom of an awakened sinner, after Christ has given him light—but it grows with the growth, and strengthens with the strength, of his Christianity. If, at the interesting period of his transition from nature to grace, he saw, even in the very least of his offences, a deadly provocation of the Lawgiver, he does not lose sight of this consideration in his future progress—nor does it barely remain with him, like one of the unproductive notions of an in-

ert and unproductive theory. It gives rise to a fearful jealousy in his heart of the least appearance of evil; and, with every man who has undergone a genuine process of conversion, do we behold the scrupulous avoidance of sin, in its most slender, as well as in its more aggravated forms. If it was the perfection of the character of Christ, who felt that it became him to fulfil all righteousness, that offered him the first solid foundation on which he could lean—then, the same character, which first drew his eye for the purpose of confidence, still continues to draw his eye for the purpose of imitation. At the outset of faith, all the essential moralities of thought, and feeling, and conviction, are in play; nor is there any thing in the progress of a real faith which is calculated to throw them back again into the dormancy out of which they had arisen. They break out, in fact, into more full and flourishing display on every new creature, with every new step, and new evolution, in his mental history. All the principles of the gospel serve, as it were, to fan and to perpetuate his hostility against sin; and all the powers of the gospel enable him, more and more, to fulfil the desires of his heart, and to carry his purposes of hostility into execution. In the case of every genuine believer, who walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit, do we behold a fulfilling of the righteousness of the law—a strenuous avoidance of sin, in its slightest possible taint or modification—a strenuous performance of duty, up to the last jot and tittle of its exactions—so, that let the untrue professors of the faith do what they will in the way of antinomianism, and let the enemies of the faith say what they will about our antinomianism, the real spirit of the dispensation under which we live is such, that whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, is accounted the least—whosoever shall do and teach them is accounted the greatest.

2. Let us, therefore, urge the spirit and the practice of this lesson upon your observation. The place for the practice of it is the familiar and week-day scene. The principle for the spirit of it descends upon the heart, from the sublimest heights of the sanctuary of God. It is not vulgarizing Christianity to bring it down to the very humblest occupations of human life.

It is, in fact, dignifying human life, by bringing it up to the level of Christianity.

It may look to some a degradation of the pulpit, when the household servant is told to make her firm stand against the temptation of open doors, and secret opportunities; or when the confidential agent is told to resist the slightest inclination to any unseen freedom with the property of his employers, or to any undiscoverable excess in the charges of his management; or when the receiver of a humble payment is told, that the tribute which is due on every written acknowledgment ought faithfully to be met, and not fictitiously to be evaded. This is not robbing religion of its sacredness, but spreading its sacredness over the face of society. It is evangelizing human life, by impregnating its minutest transactions with the spirit of the gospel. It is strengthening the wall of partition between sin and obedience. It is the Teacher of righteousness taking his stand at the outpost of that territory which he is appointed to defend, and warning his hearers of the danger that lies in a single footstep of encroachment. It is letting them know, that it is in the act of stepping over the limit, that the sinner throws the gauntlet of his defiance against the authority of God. And though he may deceive himself with the imagination that his soul is safe, because the gain of his injustice is small, such is the God with whom he has to do, that, if it be gain to the value of a single apple, then, within the compass of so small an outward dimension, may as much guilt be enclosed as that which hath brought death into our world, and carried it down in a descending ruin upon all its generations.

It may appear a very little thing, when you are told to be honest in little matters; when the servant is told to keep her hand from every one article about which there is not an express or understood allowance on the part of her superiors; when the dealer is told to lop off the excesses of that minuter fraudulency, which is so currently practised in the humble walks of merchandise; when the workman is told to abstain from those petty reservations of the material of his work, for which he is said to have such snug and ample opportunity; and when, without pronouncing on the actual extent of these transgressions, all are

told to be faithful in that which is least, else, if there be truth in our text, they incur the guilt of being unfaithful in much. It may be thought, that because such dishonesties as these are scarcely noticeable, they are therefore not worthy of notice. But it is just in the proportion of their being unnoticeable by the human eye, that it is religious to refrain from them. These are the cases in which it will be seen, whether the control of the omniscience of God makes up for the control of human observation—in which the sentiment, that thou God seest me, should carry a preponderance through all the secret places of a man's history—in which, when every earthly check of an earthly morality is withdrawn, it should be felt, that the eye of God is upon him, and that the judgment of God is in reserve for him. To him who is gifted with a true discernment of these matters, will it appear, that often, in proportion to the smallness of the doings, is the sacredness of that principle which causes them to be done with integrity; that honesty, in little transactions, bears upon it more of the aspect of holiness, than honesty in great ones; that the man of deepest sensibility to the obligations of the law, is he who feels the quickening of moral alarm at its slightest violations; that, in the morality of grains and of scruples, there may be a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more heaven-born sanctity, than in that larger morality which flashes broadly and observably upon the world; —and that thus, in the faithfulness of the household maid, or of the apprentice boy, there may be the presence of a truer principle than there is in the more conspicuous transactions of human business—what they do, being done, not with eye-service —what they do, being done unto the Lord.

And here we may remark, that nobleness of condition is not essential as a school for nobleness of character; nor does man require to be high in office, ere he can gather around his person the worth and the lustre of a high minded integrity. It is delightful to think, that humble life may be just as rich in moral grace, and moral grandeur, as the loftier places of society; that as true a dignity of principle may be earned by him who in homeliest drudgery, plies his conscientious task, as by him who stands entrusted with the fortunes of an empire; that the poor-

est menial in the land, who can lift a hand unsoiled by the pilferments that are within his reach, may have achieved a victory over temptation, to the full as honourable as the proudest patriot can boast, who has spurned the bribery of courts away from him. It is cheering to know, from the heavenly judge himself, that he who is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much; and that thus, among the labours of the field and of the work-shop, it is possible for the peasant to be as bright in honour as the peer, and have the chivalry of as much truth and virtue to adorn him.

And, as this lesson is not little in respect of principle, so neither is it little in respect of influence on the order and well-being of human society. He who is unjust in the least, is, in respect of guilt, unjust also in much. And to reverse this proposition, as it is done in the first clause of our text—he who is faithful in that which is least, is, in respect both of righteous principle and of actual observation, faithful also in much. Who is the man to whom I would most readily confide the whole of my property? He who would most disdain to put forth an injurious hand on a single farthing of it. Who is the man from whom I would have the least dread of any unrighteous encroachment? He, all the delicacies of whose principle are awakened, when he comes within sight of the limit which separates the region of justice from the region of injustice. Who is the man whom we shall never find among the greater degrees of iniquity? He who shrinks with sacred abhorrence from the lesser degrees of it. It is a true, though a homely maxim of economy, that if we take care of our small sums, our great sums will take care of themselves. And, to pass from our own things to the things of others, it is no less true, that if principle should lead us all to maintain the care of strictest honesty over our neighbour's pennies, then will his pounds lie secure from the grasp of injustice, behind the barrier of a moral impossibility. This lesson, if carried into effect among you, would so strengthen all the ramparts of security between man and man, as to make them utterly impassable; and therefore, while, in the matter of it, it may look, in one view, as one of the least of the commandments, it, in regard both of principle and of effect, is, in another view of it, one of the greatest of the commandments. And we

therefore conclude with assuring you, that nothing will spread the principle of this commandment to any great extent throughout the mass of society, but the principle of godliness. Nothing will secure the general observation of justice amongst us, in its punctuality and in its preciseness, but such a precise Christianity as many affirm to be puritanical. In other words, the virtues of society, to be kept in a healthful and prosperous condition, must be upheld by the virtues of the sanctuary. Human law may restrain many of the grosser violations. But without religion among the people, justice will never be in extensive operation as a moral principle. A vast proportion of the species will be as unjust as the vigilance and the severities of law allow them to be. A thousand petty dishonesties, which never will, and never can be brought within the cognizance of any of our courts of administration, will still continue to derange the business of human life, and to stir up all the heartburnings of suspicion and resentment among the members of human society. And it is, indeed, a triumphant reversion awaiting the Christianity of the New Testament, when it shall become manifest as day, that it is her doctrine alone, which, by its searching and sanctifying influence, can so moralize our world—as that each may sleep secure in the lap of his neighbour's integrity, and charm of confidence, between man and man, will at length be felt in the business of every town, and in the bosom of every family.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE GREAT CHRISTIAN LAW OF RECIPROCITY BETWEEN MAN AND MAN.

MATTHEW vii. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

THERE are two great classes in human society, between whom there lie certain mutual claims and obligations, which are felt by some to be of very difficult adjustment. There are those who have requests of some kind or other to make; and there are those to whom the requests are made, and with whom there is lodged the power either to grant or to refuse them. Now, at first sight, it would appear, that the firm exercise of this power of refusal is the only barrier by which the latter class can be secured against the indefinite encroachments of the former; and that, if this were removed, all the safeguards of right and property would be removed along with it. The power of refusal, on the part of those who have the right of refusal, may be abolished by an act of violence, on the part of those who have it not; and then, when this happens in individual cases, we have the crimes of assault and robbery; and when it happens on a more extended scale, we have anarchy and insurrection in the land. Or the power of refusal may be taken away by an authoritative precept of religion; and then might it still be matter of apprehension, lest our only defence against the inroads of selfishness and injustice were as good as given up, and lest the peace and interest of families should be laid open to a most fearful exposure, by the enactments of a romantic and impracticable system. Whenever this is appre-

hended, the temptation is strongly felt, either to rid ourselves of the enactments altogether, or at least to bring them down in nearer accommodation to the feelings and the conveniences of men.

And Christianity, on the very first blush of it, appears to be precisely such a religion. It seems to take away all lawfulness of resistance from the possessor, and to invest the demander with such an extent of privilege, as would make the two classes of society, to which we have just now adverted, speedily change places. And this is the true secret of the many laborious deviations that have been attempted in this branch of morality, on the obvious meaning of the New Testament. This is the secret of those many qualifying clauses, by which its most luminous announcements have been beset, to the utter darkening of them. This it is which explains the many sad invasions that have been made on the most manifest and undeniable literalities of the law and of the testimony. And our present text, among others, has received its full share of mutilation, and of what may be called "dressing up," from the hands of commentators—it having wakened the very alarms of which we have just spoken, and called forth the very attempts to quiet and to subdue them. Surely, it has been said, we can never be required to do unto others what they have no right, and no reason, to expect from us. The demand must not be an extravagant one. It must lie within the limits of moderation. It must be such as, in the estimation of every justly thinking person, is counted fair in the circumstances of the case. The principle on which our Saviour, in the text, rests the obligation of doing any particular thing to others, is, that we wish others to do that thing unto us. But this is too much for an affrighted selfishness; and, for her own protection, she would put forth a defensive sophistry upon the subject; and in place of that distinctly announced principle, on which the Bible both directs and specifies what the things are which we should do unto others, does she substitute another principle entirely—which is, merely to do unto others such things as are fair, and right, and reasonable.

Now, there is one clause of this verse which would appear to lay a positive interdict on all these qualifications. How shall

we dispose of a phrase, so sweeping and universal in its import, as that of "all things whatsoever?" We cannot think that such an expression as this was inserted for nothing, by him who has told us, that "cursed is every one who taketh away from the words of this book." There is no distinction laid down between things fair, and things unfair—between things reasonable, and things unreasonable. Both are comprehended in the "all things whatsoever." The signification is plain and absolute, that, let the thing be what it may, if you wish others to do that thing for you, it lies imperatively upon you to do the very same thing for them also.

But, at this rate, you may think that the whole system of human intercourse would go into unhingement. You may wish your next-door neighbour to present you with half his fortune. In this case, we know not how you are to escape from the conclusion, that you are bound to present him with the half of yours. Or you may wish a relative to burden himself with the expenses of all your family. It is then impossible to save you from the positive obligation, if you are equally able for it, of doing the same service to the family of another. Or you may wish to engross the whole time of an acquaintance in personal attendance upon yourself. Then, it is just your part to do the same extent of civility to another who may desire it. These are only a few specifications, out of the manifold varieties, whether of service or of donation, which are conceivable between one man and another; nor are we aware of any artifice of explanation by which they can possibly be detached from the "all things whatsoever" of the verse before us. These are the literalities which we are not at liberty to compromise—but are bound to urge, and that simply, according to the terms in which they have been conveyed to us by the great Teacher of righteousness. This may raise a sensitive dread in many a bosom. It may look like the opening of a floodgate, through which a torrent of human rapacity would be made to set in on the fair and measured domains of property, and by which all the fences of legality would be overthrown. It is some such fearful anticipation as this which causes casuistry to ply its wily expedients, and busily to devise its many limits, and its

many exceptions, to the morality of the New Testament. And yet, we think it possible to demonstrate of our text, that no such modifying is requisite; and that, though admitted strictly and rigorously as the rule of our daily conduct, it would lead to no practical conclusions which are at all formidable.

For, what is the precise circumstance which lays the obligation of this precept upon you? There may be other places in the Bible where you are required to do things for the benefit of your neighbour, whether you would wish your neighbour to do these things for your benefit or not. But this is not the requirement here. There is none other thing laid upon you in this place, than that you should do that good action in behalf of another, which you would like that other to do in behalf of yourself. If you would not like him to do it for you, then there is nothing in the compass of this sentence now before you, that at all obligates you to do it for him. If you would not like your neighbour to make so romantic a surrender to your interest, as to offer you to the extent of half his fortune, then there is nothing in that part of the gospel code which now engages us, that renders it imperative upon you to make the same offer to your neighbour. If you would positively recoil, in all the reluctance of ingenuous delicacy, from the selfishness of laying on a relation the burden of the expenses of all your family, then this is not the good office that you would have him to do unto you; and this, therefore, is not the good office which the text prescribes you to do unto him. If you have such consideration for another's ease, and another's convenience, that you could not take the ungenerous advantage of so much of his time for your accommodation, there may be other verses in the Bible which point to a greater sacrifice, on your part, for the good of others, than you would like these others to make for yours; but, most assuredly, this is not the verse which imposes that sacrifice. If you would not that others should do these things on your account, then these things form no part of the "all things whatsoever" you would that men should do unto you; and, therefore, they form no part of the "all things whatsoever" that you are required, by this verse, to do unto them. The bare circumstance of your positively not wishing that any such ser-

vices should be rendered unto you, exempts you, as far as the single authority of this precept is concerned, from the obligation of rendering these services to others. This is the limitation to the extent of those services which are called for in the text; and it is surely better, that every limitation to a commandment of God's, should be defined by God himself, than that it should be drawn from the assumptions of human fancy, or from the fears and the feelings of human convenience.

Let a man, in fact, give himself up to a strict and literal observation of the precept in this verse, and it will impress a twofold direction upon him. It will not only guide him to certain performances of good in behalf of others, but it will guide him to the regulation of his own desires of good from them. For his desires of good from others are here set up as the measure of his performances of good to others. The more selfish and unbounded his desires are, the larger are those performances with the obligation of which he is burdened. Whatsoever he would that others should do unto him, he is bound to do unto them; and, therefore, the more he gives way to ungenerous and extravagant wishes of service from those who are around him, the heavier and more insupportable is the load of duty which he brings upon himself.—The commandment is quite imperative, and there is no escaping from it; and if he, by the excess of his selfishness, should render it impracticable, then the whole punishment, due to the guilt of casting aside the authority of this commandment, follows in that train of punishment which is annexed to selfishness. There is one way of being relieved from such a burden. There is one way of reducing this verse to a moderate and practicable requirement; and that is, just to give up selfishness—just to stifle all ungenerous desires—just to moderate every wish of service or liberally from others, down to the standard of what is right and equitable; and then there may be other verses in the Bible by which we are called to be kind even to the evil and the unthankful. But, most assuredly, this verse lays upon us none other thing, than that we should do such services for others as are right and equitable.

The more extravagant, then, a man's wishes of accommodation from others are, the wider is the distance between him and

the bidden performances of our text. The separation of him from his duty increases at the rate of two bodies receding from each other by equal and contrary movements. The more selfish his desires of service are from others, the more feeble, on that very account, will be his desires of making any surrender of himself to them, and yet the greater is the amount of that surrender which is due. The poor man, in fact, is moving himself away from the rule; and the rule is just moving as fast away from the man. As he sinks, in the scale of selfishness, beneath the point of a fair and moderate expectation from others, does the rule rise, in the scale of duty, with its demands upon him; and thus there is rendering to him double for every unfair and ungenerous imposition that he would make on the kindness of those who are around him.

Now, there is one way, and a very effectual one of getting these two ends to meet. Moderate your own desires of service from others, and you will moderate, in the same degree, all those duties of service to others which are measured by these desires. Have the delicacy to abstain from any wish of encroachment on the convenience or property of another. Have the high-mindedness to be indebted for your own support to the exertions of your own honourable industry, rather than the dastardly habit of preying on the simplicity of those around you.—Have such a keen sense of equity, and such a fine tone of independent feeling, that you could not bear to be the cause of hardship or distress to a single human creature, if you could help it. Let the same spirit be in you, which the Apostle wanted to exemplify before the eye of his disciples, when he coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel; when he laboured not to be chargeable to any of them; but wrought with his own hands, rather than be burdensome. Let this mind be in you, which was also in the Apostle of the Gentiles; and then, the text before us will not come near you with a single oppressive or impracticable requirement. There may be other passages, where you are called to go beyond the strict line of justice, or common humanity, in behalf of your suffering brethren. But this passage does not touch you with any such perceptive imposition: and you, by moderating your wishes from others down to what

is fair and equitable, do, in fact, reduce the rule which binds you to act according to the measure of these wishes, down to a rule of precise and undeviating equity.

The operation is somewhat like that of a governor or fly, in mechanism. This is a very happy contrivance, by which all that is defective or excessive in the motion, is confined within the limits of equability; and every tendency, in particular, to any mischievous acceleration, is restrained. The impulse given by this verse to the conduct of man among his fellows, would seem, to a superficial observer, to carry him to all the excesses of a most ruinous and quixotic benevolence. But let him only look to the skilful adaptation of the fly. Just suppose the control of moderation and equity to be laid upon his own wishes, and there is not a single impulse, given to his conduct beyond the rate of moderation and equity. You are not required here to do all things whatsoever in behalf of others, but to do all things whatsoever for them, that you would should be done unto yourself. This is the check by which the whole of the bidden movement is governed, and kept from running out into any hurtful excess. And such is the beautiful operation of that piece of moral mechanism that we are now employed in contemplating, that while it keeps down all the aspirations of selfishness, it does, in fact, restrain every extravagancy, and impress on its obedient subjects no other movement, than that of an even and inflexible justice.

This rule of our Saviour's, then, prescribes moderation to our desires of good from others, as well as generosity to our doings in behalf of others; and makes the first the measure of obligation to the second. It may thus be seen how easily, in a Christian society, the whole work of benevolence could be adjusted, so as to render it possible for the givers not only to meet, but also to overpass, the wishes and expectations of the receivers. The rich man may have a heavier obligation laid upon him by other precepts of the New-Testament; but, by this precept, he is not bound to do more for the poor man, than what he himself would wish, in like circumstances, to be done for him. And let the poor man, on the other hand, wish for no more than what a Christian ought to wish for; let him work and en-

dure to the extent of nature's sufferance, rather than beg—and only beg, rather than that he should starve ; and in such a state of principle among men, a tide of beneficence would so go forth upon all the vacant places in society, as that there should be no room to receive it. The duty of the rich, as connected with this administration, is of so direct and positive a character, as to obtrude itself at once on the notice of the Christian moralist. But the poor also have a duty in it—to which we feel ourselves directed by the train of argument which we have now been prosecuting—and a duty, too, we think, of far greater importance even than the other, to the best interests of mankind.

For, let us first contrast the rich man who is ungenerous in his doings, with the poor man who is ungenerous in his desires ; and see from which of the two, it is that the cause of charity receives the deadlier infliction. There is, it must be admitted an individual to be met with occasionally, who represents the former of these two characters ; with every affection gravitating to itself, and to its sordid gratifications and intersts ; bent on his own pleasure, or his own avarice—and so engrossed with these, as to have no spare feeling at all for the brethren of his common nature ; with a heart obstinately shut against that most powerful of applications, the look of genuine and imploring distress—and whose very countenance speaks a surly and determined exclusion on every call that proceeds from it ; who in a tumult of perpetual alarm about new cases, and new tales of suffering, and new plans of philanthropy, has at length learned to resist and to resent every one of them ; and, spurning the whole of this disturbance impatiently away, to maintain a firm defensive over the close system of his own selfish luxuries, and his own snug accommodations. Such a man keeps back, it must be allowed from the cause of charity, what he ought to have rendered to it in his own person. There is a diminution of the philanthropic fund up to the extent of what benevolence would have awarded out of his individual means, and individual opportunities. The good cause is a sufferer, not by any positive blow it has sustained, but by the simple negation of one friendly and fostering hand, that else might have been stretched forth to aid and patronize it. There is only so much less of direct

countenance and support than would otherwise have been ; for, in this our age, we have no conception whatever of such an example being at all infectious. For a man to wallow in prosperity himself and be unmindful of the wretchedness that is around him, is an exhibition of altogether so ungainly a character, that it will far oftener provoke an observer to affront it by the contrast of his own generosity, than to render it the approving testimony of his imitation. So that all we have lost by the man who is ungenerous in his doings, is his own contribution to the cause of philanthropy. And it is a loss that can be borne. The cause of this world's beneficence can do abundantly without him. There is a ground that is yet unbroken, and there are resources which are still unexplored, that will yield a far more subtantial produce to the good of humanity, than he, and thousands as wealthy as he, could render to it out of all their capabilities.

But there is a far wider mischief inflicted on the cause of charity, by the poor man who is ungenerous in his desires ; by him, whom every act of kindness is sure to call out to the reaction of some new demand, or new expectation ; by him, on whom the hand of a giver has the effect, not of appeasing his wants, but of inflaming his rapacity ; by him who trading among the sympathies of the credulous, can dexterously appropriate for himself a portion tenfold greater than what would have blest and brightened the aspect of many a deserving family. Him we denounce as the worst enemy of the poor. It is he whose ravenous gripe wrests from them a far more abundant benefaction, than is done by the most lordly and unfeeling proprietor in the land. He is the arch-oppressor of his brethren ; and the amount of the robbery which he has practised upon them, is not to be estimated by the alms which he has monopolized, by the food, or the raiment, or the money, which he has diverted to himself, from the more modest sufferers around him he has done what is infinitely worse than turning aside the stream of charity. He has closed its floodgates. He has chilled and alienated the hearts of the wealthy, by the gall of bitterness which he has infused into this whole ministration.

A few such harpies would suffice to exile a whole neighbour-

hood from the attentions of the benevolent, by the distrust and the jealousy wherewith they have poisoned their bosoms, and laid an arrest on all the sensibilities that else would have flowed from them. It is he who, ever on the watch and on the wing about some enterprize of imposture, makes it his business to work and to prey on the compassionate principles of our nature; it is he who, in effect, grinds the faces of the poor, and that, with deadlier severity than even is done by the great baronial tyrant, the battlements of whose castle seem to frown, in all the pride of aristocracy, on the territory that is before it. There is at all times, a kindliness of feeling ready to stream forth, with a tenfold greater liberality than ever, on the humble orders of life; and it is he, and such as he, who have congealed it. He has raised a jaundiced medium between the rich and the poor, in virtue of which, the former eye the latter with suspicion; and there is not a man who wears the garb, and prefers the applications of poverty, that has not suffered from the worthless imposter who has gone before him. They are, in fact, the deceit, and the indolence, and the low sordidness of a few who have made outcasts of the many, and locked against them the feelings of the wealthy in a kind of iron imprisonment. The rich man who is ungenerous in his doings keeps back one labourer from the field of charity. But a poor man who is ungenerous in his desires, can expel a thousand labourers in disgust away from it. He sheds a cruel and extended blight over the fair region of philanthropy; and many have abandoned it, who, but for him, would fondly have lingered thereupon; very many, who, but for the way in which their simplicity has been tried and trampled upon, would still have tasted the luxury of doing good unto the poor, and made it their delight, as well as their duty, to expend and expatiate among their habitations.

We say not this to exculpate the rich; for it is their part not to be weary in well-doing, but to prosecute the work and the labour of love under every discouragement. Neither do we say this to the disparagement of the poor; for the picture we have given is of the few out of the many; and the closer the acquaintance with humble life becomes, will it be the more seen of what a high pitch of generosity even the very poorest are

capable. They, in truth, though perhaps they are not aware of it, can contribute more to the cause of charity, by the moderation of their desires, than the rich can by the generosity of their doings. They, without, it may be, one penny to bestow, might obtain a place in the record of heaven, as the most liberal benefactors of their species. There is nothing in the humble condition of life they occupy, which precludes them from all that is great or graceful in human charity. There is a way in which they may equal, and even outpeer, the wealthiest of the land, in that very virtue of which wealth alone has been conceived to have the exclusive inheritance. There is a pervading character in humanity which the varieties of rank do not obliterate; and as, in virtue of the common corruption, the poor man may be as effectually the rapacious despoiler of his brethren, as the man of opulence above him—so, there is a common excellence attainable by both; and through which, the poor man may, to the full, be as splendid in generosity as the rich, and yield a far more important contribution to the peace and comfort of society.

To make this plain—it is in virtue of a generous doing on the part of a rich man, when a sum of money is offered for the relief of want; and it is in virtue of a generous desire on the part of a poor man, when this money is refused; when, with the feeling, that his necessities do not just warrant him to be yet, a burden upon others, he declines to touch the offered liberality; when, with a delicate recoil from the unlooked-for proposal, he still resolves to put it for the present away, and to find, if possible, for himself a little longer; when, standing on the very margin of dependence, he would yet like to struggle with the difficulties of his situation, and to maintain this severe but honourable conflict, till hard necessity should force him to surrender. Let the money which he has thus nobly shifted from himself take some new direction to another; and who, we ask, is the giver of it? The first and most obvious reply is, that it is he who owned it: but, it is still more emphatically true, that it is he who has declined it. It came originally out of the rich man's abundance: but it was the noble-hearted generosity of the poor man that handed it onwards to its final destination.

He did not emanate the gift; but it is just as much that he has not absorbed it, but left it to find its full conveyance to some neighbour poorer than himself, to some family still more friendless and destitute than his own. It was given the first time out of an over-flowing fulness. It is given the second time out of stinted and self-denying penury. In the world's eye, it is the proprietor who bestowed the charity. But, in heaven's eye, the poor man who waived it away from himself to another is the more illustrious philanthropist of the two. The one gave it out of his affluence. The other gave it out of the sweat of his brow. He rose up early, and sat up late, that he might have it to bestow on a poorer than himself; and without once stretching forth a giver's hand to the necessities of his brethren, still is it possible, that by him, and such as him, may the main burden of this world's benevolence be borne.

It need scarcely be remarked, that, without supposing the offer of any sum made to a poor man who is generous in his desires, he, by simply keeping himself back from the distributions of charity, fulfils all the high functions which we have now ascribed to him. He leaves the charitable fund untouched for all that distress which is more clamorous than his own; and we, therefore, look, not to the original givers of the money, but to those who line, as it were, the margin of pauperism, and yet firmly refuse to enter it—we look upon them as the pre-eminent benefactors of society, who narrow, as it were, by a wall of defence, the ground of human dependence, and are, in fact, the guides and the guardians of all that opulence can bestow.

Thus it is, that when Christianity becomes universal, the doings of the one party, and the desires of the other, will meet and overpass. The poor will wish for no more than the rich will be delighted to bestow; and the rule of our text, which every real Christian at present finds so practicable, will, when carried over the face of society, bind all the members of it into one consenting brotherhood. The duty of doing good to others will then coalesce with that counterpart duty which regulates our desires of good from them; and the work of benevolence will, at length, be prosecuted without that alloy of rapacity on the one hand, and distrust on the other, which serves so much

to fester and disturb the whole of this ministration. To complete this adjustment, it is in every way as necessary to lay all the incumbent moralities on those who ask, as on those who confer; and never till the whole text, which comprehends the wishes of man as well as his actions, wield its entire authority over the species, will the disgusts and the prejudices, which form such a barrier between the ranks of human life, be effectually done away. It is not by the abolition of rank, but by assigning to each rank its duties, that peace, and friendship, and order, will at length be firmly established in our world. It is by the force of principle, and not by the force of some great political overthrow, that a consummation so delightful is to be attained. We have no conception whatever, that, even in millennial days, the diversities of wealth and station will at length be equalized. On looking forward to the time when kings shall be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our church, we think that we can behold the perspective of as varied a distribution of place and property as before. In the pilgrimage of life, there will still be the moving procession of the few charioted in splendour on the highway, and the many pacing by their side along the line of the same journey. There will, perhaps, be a somewhat more elevated footpath for the crowd—there will be an air of greater comfort and sufficiency amongst them; and the respectability of evident worth and goodness will sit upon the countenance of this general population. But, bating these, we look for no great change in the external aspect of society. It will only be a moral and a spiritual change. Kings will retain their sceptres, and nobles their coronets; but, as they float in magnificence along, will they look with benignant feeling on the humble wayfarers; and the honest salutations of regard and reverence will arise to them back again; and, should any weary passenger be ready to sink unfriended on his career, will he, at one time, be borne onwards by his fellows on the pathway, and, at another, will a shower of beneficence be made to descend from the crested equipage that overtakes him. It is Utopianism to think, that in the ages of our world which are yet to come, the outward distinctions of life will not all be upholden. But it is not Utopianism, it is Proph-

ecy to aver, that the breath of a new spirit will go abroad over the great family of mankind—so, that while, to the end of time, there shall be the high and the low in every passing generation, will the charity of kindred feelings, and of a common understanding, create a fellowship between them on their way, till they reach that heaven where human love shall be perfected, and all human greatness is unknown.

In various places in the New Testament, do we see the checks of spirit and delicacy laid upon all extravagant desires. Our text, while it enjoins the performance of good to others, up to the full measure of your desires of good from them, equally enjoins the keeping down of these desires to the measure of your performances. If Christian dispensers had only to do with Christian recipients, the whole work of benevolence would be with ease and harmony carried on. All that was unavoidable—all that came from the hand of Providence—all that was laid upon our suffering brethren by the unlooked-for visitations of accident or disease—all that pain and misfortune, which necessarily attaches to the constitution of the species—all this the text most amply provides for; and all this a Christian society would be delighted to stretch forth their means for the purpose of alleviating or doing away.

We should not have dwelt so long upon this lesson, were it not for the essential Christian principle that is involved in it. The morality of the gospel is not more strenuous on the side of the duty of giving of this world's goods when it is needed, than it is against the desire of receiving when it is not needed. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and therefore less blessed to receive than to give. For the enforcement of this principle among the poorer brethren, did Paul give up a vast portion of his apostolical time and labour; and that he might be an ensample to the flock of working with his own hands, rather than be burdensome, did he set himself down to the occupation of a tent-maker. That lesson is surely worthy of engrossing one sermon of an uninspired teacher, for the sake of which an inspired Apostle of the Gentiles engrossed as much time as would have admitted the preparation and the delivery of many sermons. But there is no more striking indication of the whole

spirit and character of the gospel in this matter, than the example of him who is the author of it—and of whom we read these affecting words, that he came into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It is a righteous thing in him who has of this world's goods, to minister to the necessities of others; but it is a still higher attainment of righteousness in him who has nothing but the daily earnings of his daily work to depend upon, so to manage and to strive that he shall not need to be ministered unto. Christianity overlooks no part of human conduct; and by providing for this in particular, does it, in fact, overtake, and that with a precept of utmost importance, the habit and condition of a very extended class in human society. And never does the gospel so exhibit its adaptation to our species—and never does virtue stand in such characters of strength and sacredness before us—as when impregnated with the evangelical spirit and urged by evangelical motives, it takes its most direct sanction from the life and doings of the Saviour.

And he who feels as he ought, will bear with cheerfulness all that the Saviour prescribes, when he thinks how much it is for him that the Saviour has borne. We speak not of his poverty all the time that he lived upon earth. We speak not of those years when, a houseless wanderer in an unthankful world, he had not where to lay his head. We speak not of the meek and uncomplaining sufferance with which he met the many ills that oppressed the tenor of his mortal existence. But we speak of that awful burden which crushed and overwhelmed its termination. We speak of that season of the hour and the power of darkness, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin. To estimate aright the endurance of him who himself bore our infirmities, would we ask of any individual to recollect some deep and awful period of abandonment in his own history—when that countenance which at one time beamed and brightened upon him from above, was mantled in thickest darkness—when the iron of remorse entered into his soul—and, laid on a bed of torture, he was made to behold the evil of sin, and to taste of its bitterness. Let him look back, if he can, on this conflict of many agitations, and then figure the whole of this mental wretchedness to be borne

off by the ministers of vengeance into hell, and stretched out unto eternity. And if, on the great day of expiation, a full atonement was rendered, and all that should have fallen upon us was placed upon the head of the sacrifice—let him hence compute the weight and the awfulness of those sorrows which were carried by him on whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and who poured out his soul unto the death for us. If ever a sinner, under such a visitation, shall again emerge into peace and joy in believing—if he ever shall again find his way to that fountain which is opened in the house of Judah—if he shall recover once more that sunshine of the soul, which, on the days that are past, disclosed to him the beauties of holiness here, and the glories of heaven hereafter—if ever he shall hear with effect, in this world, that voice from the mercy-seat, which still proclaims a welcome to the chief of sinners, and beckons him afresh to reconciliation—O! how gladly then should he bear throughout the remainder of his days, the whole authority of the Lord who brought him; and bind forever to his own person that yoke of the Saviour which is easy, and that burden which is light.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE DISSIPATION OF LARGE CITIES.

EPHESIANS v. 6.

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

THERE is one obvious respect in which the standard of morality amongst men, differs from that pure and universal standard which God hath set up for the obedience of his subjects. Men will not demand very urgently of each other, that, which does not very nearly, or very immediately, affect their own personal and particular interest. To the violations of justice, or truth, or humanity, they will be abundantly sensitive, because these offer a most visible and quickly felt encroachment on this interest. And thus it is, that the social virtues, even without any direct sanction from God at all, will ever draw a certain portion of respect and reverence around them; and that a loud testimony of abhorrence may often be heard from the mouths of ungodly men, against all such vices as may be classed under the general designation of vices of dishonesty.

Now, the same thing does not hold true of another class of vices, which may be termed the vices of dissipation. These do not touch, in so visible or direct a manner, on the security of what man possesses, and of what man has the greatest value for. But man is a selfish being, and therefore it is, that the ingredient of selfishness gives a keenness to his estimation of the evil and of the enormity of the former vices, which is scarcely felt at all in any estimation he may form of the latter vices. It is very true, at the same time, that if one were to compute the whole amount of the mischief they bring upon society, it

ould be found that the profligacies of mere dissipation go very
to break up the peace, and enjoyment, and even the rela-
virtues of the world: and that, if these profligacies were
rmed, it would work a mighty augmentation on the temporal
both of individuals and families. But the connexion be-
sobriety of character, and the happiness of the communi-
ot so apparent, because it is more remote than the con-
which obtains between integrity of character, and the
ss of the community; and man being not only a selfish
rtsighted being, it follows, that while the voice of exe-
may be distinctly heard against every instance of fraud or
stice, instances of licentiousness may occur on every side
, and be reported on the one hand with the utmost levity,
be listened to, on the other, with the most entire and com-
acent toleration.

Here, then, is a point, in which the general morality of the world is at utter and irreconcilable variance with the law of God. Here is a case, in which the voice that cometh forth from the tribunal of public opinion pronounces one thing, and the voice that cometh forth from the sanctuary of God pronounces another. When there is an agreement between these two voices, the principle on which obedience is rendered to their joint and concurring authority, may be altogether equivocal; and, with religious aad irreligious men, you may observe an equal exhibition of all the equities, and all the civilities of life. But when there is a discrepancy between these two voices—or when the one attaches a criminality to certain habits of conduct, and is not at all seconded by the testimony of the other—then do we escape the confusion of mingled motives, and mingled authorities. The character of the two parties emerges out of the ambiguity which involved it. The law of God points, it must be allowed, as forcible an anathema against the man of dishonesty, as against the man of dissipation. But the chief burden of the world's anathema is laid on the head of the former; and therefore it is, that, on the latter ground, we meet with more discriminative tests of principle, and gather more satisfying materials for the question of—who is on the side of the Lord of hosts, and who is against him?

The passage we have now submitted to you looks hard on the votaries of dissipation. It is like eternal truth, lifting up its own proclamation, and causing it to be heard amid the errors and the delusions of a thoughtless world. It is like the Deity himself, looking forth, as he did, from a cloud, on the Egyptians of old, and troubling the souls of those who are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. It is like the voice of heaven, crying down the voice of human society, and sending forth a note of alarm amongst its giddy generations. It is like the unrolling of a portion of that book of higher jurisprudence, out of which we shall be judged on the day of our coming account, and setting before our eyes an enactment, which, if we disregard it, will turn that day into the day of our coming condemnation. The words of man are adverted to in this solemn proclamation of God, against all unlawful and all unhallowed enjoyments, and they are called words of vanity. He sets aside the authority of human opinion altogether; and, on an irrevocable record, has he stamped such an assertion of the authority that belongeth to himself only, as serves to the end of time for an enduring memorial of his will; and as commits the truth of the Lawgiver to the execution of a sentence of wrath against all whose souls are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. There is, in fact, a peculiar deceitfulness in the matter before us; and, in this verse, are we warned against it—"Let no man deceive you with vain words; for, because of these things, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."

In the preceding verse, there is such an enumeration as serves to explain what the things are which are alluded to in the text; and it is such an enumeration, you should remark, as goes to fasten the whole terror, and the whole threat, of the coming vengeance—not on the man who combines in his own person all the characters of iniquity which are specified, but on the man who realizes any one of these characters. It is not, you will observe, the conjunction *and*, but the conjunction *or*, which is interposed between them. It is not as if we said, that the man who is dishonest, and licentious, and covetous, and unfeeling, shall not inherit the kingdom of God—but the man who is either dishonest, or licentious, or covetous, or unfeeling. On

the single and exclusive possession of any one of these attributes, will God deal with you as with an enemy. The plea, that we are a little thoughtless, but we have a good heart, is conclusively cut asunder by this portion of the law and of the testimony. And in a corresponding passage, in the ninth verse of the sixth chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, the same peculiarity is observed in the enumeration of those who shall be excluded from God's favour, and have the burden of God's wrath laid on them through eternity. It is not the man who combines all the deformities of character which are there specified, but the man who realizes any one of the separate deformities. Some of them are the vices of dishonesty, others of them are the vices of dissipation; and, as if aware of a deceitfulness from this cause, he, after telling us that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, bids us not be deceived—for that neither the licentious, nor the abominable, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

He who keepeth the whole law, but offendeth in one point, says the Apostle James, is guilty of all. The truth is, that his disobedience on this one point may be more decisive of the state of his loyalty to God, than his keeping of all the rest. It may be the only point on which the character of his loyalty is really brought to the trial. All his conformities to the law of God might have been rendered, because they thwarted not his own inclination; and, therefore, would have been rendered though there had been no law at all. The single infraction may have taken place in the only case where there was a real competition between the will of the creature, and the will of the Creator; and the event proves to which of the two the right of superiority is awarded. Allegiance to God in truth is but one principle, and may be described by one short and summary expression; and one act of disobedience may involve in it such a total surrender of the principle, as goes to dethrone God altogether from the supremacy which belongs to him. So that the account between a creature and the Creator is not like an account made up of many items, where the expunging of one item would only make one small and fractional deduction from the whole sum of

obedience. If you reserve but a single item from this account, and another makes a principle of completing and rendering up the whole of it, then your character varies from his not by a slight shade of difference, but stands contrasted with it in direct and diametric opposition. We perceive, that, while with him the will of God has the mastery over all his inclinations, with you there is, at least, one inclination which has the mastery over God; that while in his bosom there exists a single and subordinating principle of allegiance to the law, in yours there exists another principle, which, on the coming round of a fit opportunity, developes itself in an act of transgression; that, while with him God may be said to walk and to dwell in him, with you there is an evil visitant, who has taken up his abode in your heart, and lodges there either in a state of dormancy or of action, according to circumstances; that, while with him the purpose is honestly proceeded on, of doing nothing which God disapproves, with you there is a purpose not only different, but opposite, of doing something which he disapproves. On this single difference is suspended not a question of degree, but a question of kind. There are presented to us not two hues of the same colour, but two colours, just as broadly contrasted with each other as light and darkness. And such is the state of the alternative between a partial and an unreserved obedience, that while God imperatively claims the one as his due, he looks on the other as an expression of defiance against him, and against his sovereignty.

It is the very same in civil government. A man renders himself an outcast by one act of disobedience. He does not need to accumulate upon himself the guilt of all the higher atrocities in crime, ere he forfeits his life to the injured laws of his country. By the perpetration of any of them is the whole vengeance of the state brought to bear upon his person, and sentence of death is pronounced on a single murder, or forgery, or act of violent depredation.

And let us ask you just to reflect on the tone and spirit of that man towards his God, who would palliate, for example, the vices of dissipation to which he is addicted, by alleging his utter exemption from the vices of dishonesty, to which he is not

addicted. Just think of the real disposition and character of his soul, who can say, "I will please God, but only when, in so doing, I also please myself; or I will do homage to his law, but just in those instances by which I honour the rights, and fulfil the expectations, of society; or I will be decided by his opinion of the right and the wrong, but just when the opinion of my neighbourhood, lends its powerful and effective confirmation. But in other cases, when the matter is reduced to a bare question between man and God, when he is the single party I have to do with, when his will and his wrath are the only elements which enter into the deliberation, when judgment, and eternity, and the voice of him who speaketh from heaven are the only considerations at issue--then do I feel myself at greater liberty, and I shall take my own way, and walk in the counsel of mine own heart, and after the sight of my own eyes." O! be assured, that when all this is laid bare on the day of reckoning, and the discerner of the heart pronounces upon it, and such a sentence is to be given, as will make it manifest to the consciences of all assembled, that true and righteous are the judgments of God—there is many a creditable man who has passed through the world with the plaudits and the testimonies of all his fellows, and without one other flaw upon his reputation but the very slender one of certain harmless foibles, and certain good-humoured peculiarities, who when brought to the bar of account, will stand convicted there of having made a divinity of his own will, and spent his days in practical and habitual atheism.

And this argument is not at all affected by the actual state of sinfulness and infirmity into which we have fallen. It is true, even of saints on earth, that they commit sin. But to be overtaken in a fault is one thing; to commit that fault with the deliberate consent of the mind is another. There is in the bosom of every true Christian a strenuous principle of resistance to sin, and it belongs to the very essence of the principle that it is resistance to *all* sin. It admits of no voluntary indulgence to one sin more than to another. Such an indulgence would not only change the character of what may be called the elementary principle of regeneration, but would destroy it altogether. The man who has entered on a course of Christian disci-

pleship, carries on an unsparing and universal war with all iniquity. He has chosen Christ, for his alone master, and he struggles against the ascendency of every other. It is his sustained and habitual exertion in following after him to forsake all; so that if his performances were as complete as his endeavour, you would not merely see a conformity to some of the precepts, but a conformity to the whole law of God. At all events, the endeavour is an honest one, and so far successful, that sin has not the dominion; and sure we are, that, in such a state of things, the vices of dissipation can have no existence. These vices can be more effectually shunned, and more effectually surmounted, for example, than the infirmities of an unhappy temper. So that, if dissipation still attaches to the character, and appears in the conduct of any individual, we know not a more decisive evidence of the state of that individual as being one of the many who crowd the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We look no further to make out our estimate of his present condition as being that of a rebel, and of his future prospect as being that of spending an eternity in hell. There is no halting between two opinions in this matter. The man who enters a career of dissipation throws down the gauntlet of defiance to his God. The man who persists in this career keeps on the ground of hostility against him.

Let us now endeavour to trace the origin, the progress, and the effects, of a life of dissipation.

First. Then it may be said of a very great number of young, on their entrance into the business of the world, that they have not been enough fortified against its seducing influences by their previous education at home. Generally speaking, they come out from the habitation of their parents unarmed and unprepared for the contest which awaits them. If the spirit of this world's morality reign in their own family, then it cannot be, that their introduction into a more public scene of life will be very strictly guarded against those vices on which the world placidly smiles, or at least regards with silent toleration. They may have been told, in early boyhood, of the infamy of a lie. They may have had the virtues of punctuality, and of economy, and of regular attention to business, pressed upon their observation. They

may have heard a uniform testimony on the side of good behaviour, up to the standard of such current moralities as obtain in their neighbourhood; and this, we are ready to admit, may include in it a testimony against all such excesses of dissipation as would unfit them for the prosecution of this world's interests. But let us ask, whether there are not parents, who, after they have carried the work of discipline thus far, forbear to carry it any farther; who, while they would mourn over it as a family trial should any son of theirs fall a victim to excessive dissipation, yet are willing to tolerate the lesser degress of it; who, instead of deciding the question on the alternative of his heaven or his hell are satisfied with such a measure of sobriety as will save him from ruin and disgrace in this life; who, if they can only secure this, have no great objection to the moderate share he may take in this world's conformities; who feel, that in this matter there is a necessity and a power of example against which it is vain to struggle, and which must be acquiesced in; who deceive themselves with the fancied impossibility of stopping the evil in question—and say, that business must be gone through; and that, in the prosecution of it, exposures must be made; and that, for the success of it, a certain degree of accommodation to others must be observed; and seeing that it is so mighty an object for one to widen the extent of his connexions, he must neither be very retired nor very peculiar—nor must his hours of companionship be too jealously watched or inquired into—nor must we take him too strictly to task about engagements, and acquaintances, and expenditure—nor must we forget that while sobriety has its time and its season in one period of life, indulgence has its season in another; and we may fetch from the recollected follies of our own youth, a lesson of connivance for the present occasion; and altogether there is no help for it; and it appears to us, that absolutely and totally to secure him from ever entering upon scenes of dissipation, you must absolutely and totally withdraw him from the world, and surrender all his prospects of advancement, and give up the object of such a provision for our families as we feel to be a first and most important concern with us.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,"

says the Bible, "and all other things shall be added unto you." This is the promise which the faith of a Christian parent will rest upon; and in the face of every hazard to the worldly interests of his offspring, will he bring them up in the strict nurture and admonition of the Lord; and he will loudly protest against iniquity, in all its degrees, and in all its modifications; and while the power of discipline remains with him, will it ever be exerted on the side of pure, faultless, undeviating obedience; and he will tolerate no exception whatever; and he will brave all that looks formidable in singularity, and all that looks menacing in separation from the custom and countenance of the world; and feeling that his main concern is to secure for himself and for his family a place in the city which hath foundations, will he spurn all the maxims, and all the plausibilities of a contagious neighbourhood away from him. He knows the price of his Christianity, and it is that he must break off conformity with the world—nor for any paltry advantage which it has to offer, will he compromise the eternity of his children. And let us tell the parents of another spirit, and principle, that they are as good as incurring the guilt of a human sacrifice; that they are offering up their children at the shrine of an idol; that they are parties in provoking the wrath of God against them here; and on the day when that wrath is to be revealed, shall they hear not only the moanings of their despair but the outcries of their bitterest execration. On that day, the glance of reproach from their own neglected offspring will throw a deeper shade of wretchedness over the dark and boundless futurity that lies before them. And if, at the time when prophets rung the tidings of God's displeasure against the people of Israel it was denounced as the foulest of all their abominations that they caused their children to pass through the fire unto Moloch—know ye parents who in placing your children on some road to gainful employment, have placed them without a sigh in the midst of depravity, so near and so surrounding, that, without a miracle, they must perish, you have done an act of idolatry to the god of this world; you have commanded your household, after you to worship him as the great divinity of their lives; and you have caused your children to make their approaches unto his pre-

sence—and, in so doing, to pass through the fire of such temptations as have destroyed them.

We do not wish to offer you an overcharged picture on this melancholy subject. What we now say is not applicable to all. Even in the most corrupt and crowded of our cities, parents are to be found, who nobly dare the surrender of every vain and flattering illusion, rather than surrender the Christianity of their children. And what is still more affecting, over the face of the country do we meet with such parents, who look on this world as a passage to another, and on all the members of their household as fellow-travellers to eternity along with them; and who, in this true spirit of believers, feel the salvation of their children to be, indeed, the burden of their best and dearest interest; and who, by prayer, and precept, and example, have strenuously laboured with their souls, from the earliest light of their understanding; and have taught them to tremble at the way of evil doers, and to have no fellowship with those who keep not the commandments of God—nor is there a day more sorrowful in the annals of this pious family, than when the course of time has brought them onwards to the departure of their eldest boy—and he must bid adieu to his native home, with all the peace, and all the simplicity which abound in it—and as he eyes in fancy the distant town whither he is going, does he shrink as from the thought of an unknown wilderness—and it is his firm purpose to keep aloof from the dangers and the profligacies which deform it—and, should sinners offer to entice him, not to consent, and never, never, to forget the lessons of a father's vigilance, the tenderness of a mother's prayers.

Let us now, in the next place, pass from that state of things which obtains among the young at their outset into the world, and take a look of that state of things which obtains after they have got fairly introduced into it—when the children of the ungodly, and the children of the religious, meet on one common arena—when business associates them together in one chamber, and the omnipotence of custom lays it upon them all to meet together at periodic intervals, and join in the same parties, and the same entertainments—when the yearly importation

of youths from the country falls in with that assimilating mass of corruption which has got so firm and so rooted an establishment in the town—when the frail and unsheltered delicacies of the timid boy have to stand a rude and a boisterous contest with the hardier depravity of those who have gone before him—when ridicule, and example, and the vain words of a delusive sophistry, which palliates in his hearing the enormity of vice, are all brought to bear upou his scruples, and to stifle the remorse he might feel when he casts his principle and his purity away from him—when, placed as he is in a land of strangers, he finds, that the tenure of acquaintanceship, with nearly all around him, is, that he render himself up in a conformity to their doings—when a voice, like the voice of protecting friendship, bids him to the feast ; and a welcome, like the welcome of honest kindness, hails his accession to the society ; and a spirit, like the spirit of exhilarating joy, animates the whole scene of hospitality before him ; and hours of rapture roll successively away on the wings of merriment, jocularity, and song ; and after the homage of many libations has been rendered to honour, and fellowship, and patriotism, impurity is at length proclaimed in full and open cry, as one presiding divinity, at the board of their social entertainment.

And now it remains to compute the general result of a process, which we assert of the vast majority of our young, on their way to manhood, that they have to undergo. The result is, that the vast majority are initiated into all the practices, and describe the full career of dissipation. Those who have imbibed from their fathers the spirit of this world's morality, are not sensibly arrested in this career, either by the opposition of their own friends, or by the voice of their own conscience. Those who have imbibed an opposite spirit, and have brought it into competition with an evil world, and have at length yielded, have done so, we may well suppose, with many a sigh, and many a struggle, and many a look of remembrance on those former years when they were taught to lisp the prayer of infancy, and were trained in a mansion of piety to a reverence for God, and for all his ways ; and, even still, will a parent's parting advice haunt his memory and a letter from the good old man revive

the sensibilities which at one time guarded and adorned him; and, at times, will the transient gleam of remorse lighten up its agony within him; and when he contrasts the profaneness and depravity of his present companions, with the sacredness of all he ever heard or saw in his father's dwelling, it will almost feel as if conscience were again to resume her power, and the revisiting spirit of God to call him back again from the paths of wickedness; and on his restless bed will the images of guilt conspire to disturb him, and the terrors of punishment offer to scare him away; and many will be the dreary and dissatisfied intervals when he shall be forced to acknowledge that in bartering his soul for the pleasures of sin, he has bartered the peace and enjoyment of the world along with it. But alas! the entanglements of companionship have got hold of him; and the inveteracy of habit tyrannizes over all his purposes; and the stated opportunity again comes round; and the loud laugh of his partners in guilt chases, for another season, all his despondency away from him; and the infatuation gathers upon him every month; and a hardening process goes on within his heart; and the deceitfulness of sin grows apace; and he at length becomes one of the sturdiest and most unrelenting of her votaries; and he, in his turn, strengthens the conspiracy that is formed against the morals of a new generation; and all the ingenuous delicacies of other days are obliterated; and he contracts a temperament of knowing, hackneyed, unfeeling depravity; and thus the mischief is transmitted from one year to another, and keeps up the guilty history of every place of crowded population.

And let us here speak one word to those seniors in depravity —those men who give to the corruption of acquaintances, who are younger than themselves, their countenance, their agency; and who can initiate them without a sigh in the mysteries of guilt, and care not though a parent's hope should wither and expire under the contagion of their ruffian example. It is only upon their own conversion that we can speak to them the pardon of the gospel. It is only if they themselves are washed, and sanctified, and justified, that we can warrant their personal deliverance from the wrath that is to come. But under all the concealment which rests on the futurities of God's adminis-

tration, we know that there are degrees of suffering in hell—and that while some are beaten with few stripes, others are beaten with many. And surely, if they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever, we may be well assured that they who patronize the cause of iniquity—they who can beckon others to that way which leadeth on to the chambers of death—they who can aid and witness, without a sigh, the extinction of youthful modesty—surely, it may well be said of such, that on them a darker frown will fall from the judgment-seat, and through eternity will they have to bear the pains of a fiercer indignation.

Having thus looked to the commencement of a course of dissipation, and to its progress, let us now, in the third place, look to its usual termination. We speak not at present of the coming death, and of the coming judgment, but of the change which takes place on many a votary of licentiousness, when he becomes what the world calls a reformed man; and puts on the decencies of a sober and domestic establishment; and bids adieu to the pursuits and the profligacies of youth, not because he has repented of them but because he has outlived them. You all perceive how this may be done without one movement of the heart, or of the understanding, towards God—that it is done by many, though duty to him be not in all their thoughts—that the change, in this case, is not from the idol of pleasure unto God, but only from one idol to another—and that, after the whole of this boasted transformation, we may still behold the same body of sin and of death, and only a new complexion thrown over it. There may be the putting on of sobriety, but there is no putting on of godliness. It is a common and easy transition to pass from one kind of disobedience to another, but it is not so easy to give up that rebelliousness of the heart which lies at the root of all disobedience. It may be easy, after the wonted course of dissipation is ended, to hold out another aspect altogether in the eye of acquaintances; but it is not so easy to recover that shock, and that overthrow, which the religious principle sustains, when a man first enters the world, and surrenders himself to the power of its enticements. Such were some of you, says the Apostle, but ye are washed, and sanctified,

and justified. Our reformed man knows not the meaning of such a process; and, most assuredly, has not at all realized it in the history of his own person. We will not say what new object he is running after. It may be wealth, or ambition, or philosophy; but it is nothing connected with the interest of his soul. It bears no reference whatever to the concerns of that great relationship which obtains between the creature and the Creator. The man has withdrawn, and perhaps for ever, from the scenes of dissipation, and has betaken himself to another way—but still it is his own way. It is not the will or the way of God that he is yet caring for. Such a man may bid adieu to profligacy in his own person. But he lifts up the light of his countenance on the profligacy of others. He gives it the whole weight and authority of his connivance. He wields we will say it, such an instrumentality of seduction over the young, as, though not so alarming, is far more dangerous than the undisguised attempts of those who are the immediate agents of corruption. The formal and deliberate conspiracy of those who club together, at stated terms of companionship, may be all seen, and watched, and guarded against. But how shall we pursue this conspiracy into its other ramifications? How shall we be able to neutralize that insinuating poison which distils from the lips of grave and respectable citizens? How shall we be able to dissipate that gloss which is thrown by the smile of elders and superiors over the sins of forbidden indulgence? How can we disarm the bewitching sophistry which lies in all these evident tokens of complacency, on the part of advanced and reputable men? How is it possible to trace the progress of this sore evil, throughout all the business and intercourse of society? How can we stem the influence of evil communications, when the friend, and the patron, and the man who has cheered and signalized us by his polite invitations, turns his own family-table into a nursery of licentiousness? How can we but despair of ever witnessing on earth a pure and a holy generation, when even parents will utter their polluting levities in the hearing of their own children; and vice and humour, and gaiety, are all indiscriminately blended into one conversation; and a loud laugh, from the initiated and the uninitiated in profligacy, is

ever ready to flatter and to regale the man who can thus prostitute his powers of entertainment? O! for an arm of strength to demolish this firm and far spread compact of iniquity; and for the power of some such piercing and prophetic voice, as might convince our reformed men of the baleful influence they cast behind them on the morals of the succeeding generation.

We, at the same time, have our eye perfectly open to that great external improvement which has taken place, of late years, in the manners of society. There is not the same grossness of conversation. There is not the same impatience for the withdrawment of him, who asked to grace the outset of an assembled party, is compelled, at a certain step in the process of conviviality, by the obligations of professional decency to retire from it. There is not so frequent an exaction of this as one of the established proprieties of social or of fashionable life. And if such an exaction was ever laid by the omnipotence of custom on a minister of Christianity, it is such an exaction as ought never, never, to be complied with. It is not for him to lend the sanction of his presence to a meeting with which he could not sit to its final termination. It is not for him to stand associated, for a single hour, with an assemblage of men who begin with hypocrisy, and end with downright bla[illegible]dism. It is not for him to watch the progress of the co[illegible]dry, and to hit the well selected moment when talk, a[illegible]e, and boisterous merriment, are on the eve of burs[illegible] on the company, and carrying them forward to [illegible] and uproar of their enjoyment. It is quite in vai[illegible] he has only sanctified one part of such an entertai[illegible] has as good as given his connivance to the who[illegible] left behind him a discharge in full of all its abomina[illegible] therefore, be they who they may, whether they rank [illegible] proudest aristocracy of our land, or are charioted in [illegible] along, as the wealthiest of the citizens, it is his part to purely and indignantly aloof from such society as this would from the vilest and most debasing associations [illegible] fligacy.

And now the important question comes to be put; what likeliest way of setting up a barrier against this desolating

rent of corruption, into which there enter so many elements of power and strength, that to the general eye, it looks altogether irresistible? It is easier to give a negative, than an affirmative answer to this question. And, therefore it shall be our first remark, that the mischief never will be effectually combated by any expedient separate from the growth and the transmission of personal Christianity throughout the land. If no addition be made to the stock of religious principle in a country, then the profligacy of a country will make its obstinate stand against all the mechanism of the most skilful, and plausible, and well looking contrivances. It must not be disguised from you, that it does not lie within the compass either of prisons or penitentiaries to work any sensible abatement on the wickedness of our existing generation. The operation must be of a preventive, rather than of a corrective tendency. It must be brought to bear upon boyhood; and be kept up through that whole period of random exposures through which it has to run, on its way to an established condition in society; and a high tone of moral purity must be infused into the bosom of many individuals; and their agency will effect through the channels of family and social connexion, what never can be effected by any framework of artificial regulations, so long as the spirit and character of society remain what they are. In other words, the progress of reformation will never be sensibly carried forward beyond the progress of personal Christianity in the world; and therefore, the question resolves itself into the likeliest method of adding to the number of Christian parents who may fortify the principles of their children at their first outset in life—of adding to the number of Christian young men, who might nobly dare to be singular, and to perform the angelic office of guardians and advisers to those who are younger than themselves—of adding to the number of Christians in middle and advanced life, who might, as far as in them lies, alter the general feeling and countenance of society; and blunt the force of that tacit but most seductive testimony, which has done so much to throw a palliative veil over the guilt of a life of dissipation.

Such a question cannot be entered upon, at present, in all its bearings, and in all its generality. And we must, therefore,

simply satisfy ourselves with the object that as we have attempted already to approach the indifference of parents, and to reproach the unfeeling depravity of those young men who scatter their pestilential levities around the whole circle of their companionship, we may now shortly attempt to lay upon the men of middle and advanced life, in general society, their share of responsibility for the morals of the rising generation. For the promotion of this great cause, it is not at all necessary to school them into any nice or exquisite contrivances. Could we only give them a desire towards it, and a sense of obligation, they would soon find their own way to the right exercise of their own influence in forwarding the interests of purity and virtue among the young. Could we only affect their consciences on this point, there would be almost no necessity whatever to guide or enlighten their understanding. Could we only get them to be Christians, and to carry their Christianity into their business, they would then feel themselves invested with a guardianship; and that time, and pains, and attention, ought to be given to the fulfilment of its concerns. It is quite in vain to ask, as if there was any mystery, or any helplessness about it, "What can they do?" For, is it not the fact most palpably obvious, that much can be done even by the mere power of example? Or might not the master of any trading establishment send the pervading influence of his own principles among some, at least, of the servants and auxiliaries who belong to it? Or can he, in no degree whatever, so select those who are admitted, as to ward off much contamination from the branches of his employ? Or might not he, so deal out his encouragement to the deserving, as to confirm them in all their purposes of sobriety? Or might not he interpose the shield of his countenance and his testimony between a struggling youth and the ridicule of his acquaintances? Or, by the friendly conversation of half an hour, might not he strengthen within him every principle of virtuous resistance? By these, and by a thousand other expedients, which will readily suggest themselves to him who has the good will, might not a healing water be sent forth through the most corrupted of all our establishments; and it be made safe for the unguarded young to officiate in its chambers; and it be made possible to

enter upon the business of the world without entering on such a scene of temptation, as to render almost inevitable the vice of the world, and its impiety, and its final and everlasting condemnation? Would Christians only be open and intrepid, and carry their religion into their merchandise; and furnish us with a single hundred of such houses in this city, where the care and character of the master formed a guarantee for the sobriety of all his dependents, it would be like the clearing out of a piece of cultivated ground in the midst of a frightful wilderness; and parents would know whither they could repair with confidence for the settlement of their offspring; and we should behold, what is mightily to be desired, a line of broad and visible demarcation between the church and the world; and an interest so precious as the immortality of children, would no longer be left to the play of such fortuitous elements, as operated at random throughout the confused mass of a mingled and indiscriminate society. And thus, the pieties of a father's house might bear to be transplanted even into the scenes of ordinary business; and instead of withering, as they do at present, under a contagion which spreads in every direction, and fills up the whole face of the community, they might flourish in that moral region which was occupied by a peculiar people, and which they had reclaimed from a world that lieth in wickedness.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE VITIATING INFLUENCE OF THE HIGHER UPON THE LOWER ORDERS OF SOCIETY.

LUKE xvii, 1, 2.

Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come; but wo unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

To offend another, according to the common acceptation of the words, is to displease him.—Now, this is not its acceptation in the verse before us, nor in several other verses of the New Testament. It were coming nearer to the scriptural meaning of the term, had we, instead of offence and offending, adopted the terms, scandal and scandalizing. But the full signification of the phrase, to offend another, is to cause him to fall from the faith and obedience of the gospel. It may be such a falling away as that a man recovers himself—like the disciples, who were all offended in Christ, and forsook him; and, after a season of separation, were at length re-established in their discipleship.—Or it may be such a falling away as that there is no recovery—like those in the gospel of John, who, offended by the sayings of our Saviour, went back, and walked no more with him. If you put such a stumbling block in the way of a neighbour, who is walking on a course of christian discipleship, as to make him fall, you offend him. It is in this sense that our Saviour uses the word, when he speaks of your own right hand, or your own right eye, offending you. They may do so, by giving you an occasion to fall.—And what is here translated offend, is, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, translated to

make to offend; where Paul says, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

The little ones to whom our Saviour alludes, in this passage, he elsewhere more fully particularises, by telling us, that they are those who believe in him. There is no call here for entering into any controversy about the doctrine of perseverance. It is not necessary, either for the purpose of explaining, or of giving force to the practical lesson of the text now submitted to you. We happen to be as much satisfied with the doctrine, that he who hath a real faith in the gospel of Christ will never fall away, as we are satisfied with the truth of any identical proposition. If a professing disciple do, in fact, fall away, this is a phenomenon which might be traced to an essential defect of principle at the first; which proves, in fact, that he made the mistake of one principle for another; and that, while he thought he had the faith, it was not that very faith of the New Testament which is unto salvation. There might have been the semblance of a work of grace, without its reality. Such a work, if genuinely begun, will be carried onwards even unto perfection. But this is a point on which it is not at all necessary, at present to dogmatize. We are led, by the text, to expatiate on the guilt of that one man who has wrecked the interest of another man's eternity. Now, it may be very true, that if the second has actually entered within the strait gate, it is not in the power of the first, with all his artifices, and all his temptations, to draw him out again. But instead of having entered the gate, he may only be on the road that leads to it; and it is enough, amid the uncertainties which, in this life, hang over the question of—who are really believers, and who are not? that it is not known in which of these two conditions the little one is; and that, therefore, to seduce him from obedience to the will of Christ, may, in fact, be to arrest his progress towards Christ, and to draw him back unto the perdition of his soul. The whole guilt of the text may be realized by him who keeps back another from the church, where he might have heard, and heard with acceptance, that word of life which he has not yet accepted; or by him, whose influence or whose example detains, in the entanglement

of any one sin, the acquaintance who is meditating an outset on the path of decided Christianity—seeing, that every such outset will land in disappointment those who, in the act of following after Christ, do not forsake all; or by him who tampers with the conscience of an apparently zealous and confirmed disciple, so as to seduce him into some habitual sin, either of neglect or of performance—seeing, that the individual who but for this seduction might have cleaved fully unto the Lord, and turned out a prosperous and decided Christian, has been led to put a good conscience away from him—and so, by making shipwreck of his faith, has proved to the world, that it was not the faith which could obtain the victory. It is true, that it is not possible to seduce the elect. But even this suggestion, perverse and unjust as it would be in its application, is not generally present to the mind of him who is guilty of the attempt to seduce, or of the act which carries a seducing influence along with it. The guilt with which he is chargeable, is that of an indifference to the spiritual and everlasting fate of others. He is wilfully the occasion of causing those who are the little ones, or, for any thing he knows, might have been the little ones of Christ, to fall; and it is against him that our Saviour, in the text, lifts not a cool but an impassioned testimony. It is of him that he utters one of the most severe and solemn denunciations of the gospel.

If this text were thoroughly pursued into its manifold applications, it would be found to lay a weight of fearful responsibility upon us all. We are here called upon not to work out our own salvation, but to compute the reflex influence of all our works, and of all our ways, on the principles of others. And when one thinks of the mischief which this influence might spread around it, even from Christians of chiefest reputation: when one thinks of the readiness of man to take shelter in the example of an acknowledged superior; when one thinks that some inconsistency of ours might seduce another into such an imitation as overbears the reproaches of his own conscience, and as, by vitiating the singleness of his eye, makes the whole of his body, instead of being full of light, to be full of darkness; when one takes the lesson along with him into the various conditions of life he may

be called by Providence to occupy, and thinks, that if, either as a parent surrounded by his family, or as a master by the members of his establishment, or as a citizen by the many observers of his neighbourhood around him, he shall either speak such words, or do such actions, or administer his affairs in such a way as is unworthy of his high and immortal destination, that then a taint of corruption is sure to descend from such an exhibition, upon the immortals who are on every side of him; when one thinks of himself as the source and the centre of a contagion which might bring a blight upon the graces and the prospects of other souls besides his own—surely this is enough to supply him with a reason why, in working out his own personal salvation, he should do it with fear, and with watchfulness, and with much trembling.

But we are now upon the ground of a higher and more delicate conscientiousness, than is generally to be met with. Whereas, our object, at present, is to expose certain of the grosser offences which abound in society, and which spread a most dangerous and ensnaring influence among the individuals who compose it. To this we have been insensibly led, by the topics of that discourse which we addressed to you on a former occasion; and when it fell in our way to animadvert on the magnitude of that man's guilt, who, either by his example, or his connivance, or his direct and formal tuition, can speed the entrance of the yet unpractised young on a career of dissipation. And whether he be a parent, who trenched in this world's maxims, can, without a struggle, and without a sigh, leave his helpless offspring to take their random and unprotected way through this world's conformities; or whether he be one of those seniors in depravity, who can cheer on his more youthful companion to a surrender of all those scruples, and all those delicacies, which have hitherto adorned him; or whether he be a more aged citizen, who, having run the wonted course of intemperance, can cast an approving eye on the corruption throughout all its stages, and give a tenfold force to all its allurements, by setting up the authority of grave and reformed manhood upon its side; in each of these characters do we see an offence that is pregnant with deadliest mischief to the principles of the rising generation: and while

we are told by our text, that, for such offences, there exists some deep and mysterious necessity—insomuch, that it is impossible but that offences must come—yet let us not forget to urge on every one sharer in this work of moral contamination, that never does the meek and gentle Saviour speak in terms more threatening or more reproachful, than when he speaks of the enormity of such misconduct. There cannot, in truth, be a grosser outrage committed on the order of God's administration, than that which he is in the habit of inflicting. There cannot, surely, be a directer act of rebellion, than that which multiplies the adherents of its own cause, and which swells the hosts of the rebellious. There cannot be made to rest a feller condemnation on the head of iniquity, than that which is sealed by the blood of its own victims, and its own proselytes. Nor should we wonder when that is said of such an agent for iniquity which is said of the betrayer of our Lord. It were better for him that he had not been born. It were better for him, now that he is born, could he be committed back again to deep annihilation. Rather than that he should offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

This is one case of such offences as are adverted to in the text. Another and still more specific is beginning, we understand, to be exemplified in our own city, though it has not attained to the height or to the frequency at which it occurs in a neighbouring metropolis. We allude to the doing of week-day business upon the Sabbath. We allude to that violence which is rudely offered to the feelings and the associations of sacredness, by those exactions that an ungodly master lays at times on his youthful dependents—when those hours which they wont to spend in church, they are called upon to spend in the counting house—when that day, which ought to be a day of piety, is turned into a day of posting and of penmanship—when the rules of the decalogue are set aside, and utterly superseded by the rules of the great trading establishment; and every thing is made to give way to the hurrying emergency of orders, and clearances, and the demands of instant correspondence. Such

is the magnitude of this stumblingblock, that many is the young man who has here fallen to rise no more—that, at this point of departure, he has so widened his distance from God, as never, in fact, to return to him—that, in this distressing contest between principle and necessity, the final blow has been given to his religious principles—that the master whom he serves, and under whom he earns his provision for time, has here wrested the whole interets of his eternity away from him—that, from this moment, there gathers upon his soul the complexion of a hardier and more determined impiety—and conscience once stifled now speaks to him with a feebler voice—and the world obtains a firmer lodgement in his heart—and, renouncing all his original tenderness about Sabbath, and Sabbath employments, he can now, with the thorough unconcern of a fixed and familiarised proselyte, keep equal pace by his fellows throughout every scene of profanation— and he who wont to tremble and recoil from the freedoms of irreligion with the sensibility of a little one, may soon become the most daringly rebellious of them all—and that Sabbath which he has now learned, at one time, to give to business, he at another, gives to unhallowed enjoyments—and it is turned into a day of visits and excursions, given up to pleasure, and enlivened by all the mirth and extravagance of holiday—and, when sacrament is proclaimed rom the city pulpits, he, the apt, the well trained disciple of his corrupt and corrupting superior, is the readiest to plan the amusements of the coming opportunity, and among the very foremost in the ranks of emigration—and though he may look back, at times, to the Sabbath of his Father's pious house, yet the retrospect is always becoming dimmer, and at length it ceases to disturb him—and thus the alienation widens every year, till, wholly given over to impiety, he lives without God in the world.

And were we asked to state the dimensions of that iniquity which stalks regardlessly, and at large, over the ruin of youthful principles—were we asked to find a place in the catalogue of guilt for a crime, the atrocity of which is only equalled, we understand, by its frequency—were we called to characterise the man who, so far from attempting one counteracting influ-

ence against the profligacy of his dependents, issues, from the chair of authority on which he sits, a commandment, in the direct face of a commandment from God—the man who has chartered impiety in articles of agreement, and has vested himself with a property in that time which only belongs to the Lord of the Sabbath—were we asked to look to the man who could thus overbear the last remnants of remorse in a struggling and unpractised bosom, and glitter in all the ensigns of a prosperity that is reared on the violated consciences of those who are beneath him—O! were the question put, to whom shall we liken such a man? or what is the likeness to which we can compare him? we would say, that the guilt of him who trafficked on the highway, or trafficked on that outraged coast, from whose weeping families children were inseparably torn, was far outmeasured by the guilt which could thus frustrate a father's fondest prayers, and trample under foot the hopes and the preparations of eternity.

There is another way whereby in the employ of a careless and unprincipled master, it is impossible but that offences must come. You know just as well as we do, that there are chicaneries in business; and, so long as we forbear stating the precise extent of them, there is not an individual among you who has a title to construe the assertion into an affronting charge of criminality against himself. But you surely know as well as we, that the mercantile profession, conducted, as it often is, with the purest integrity, and laying no resistless necessity whatever for the surrender of principle on any of its members; and dignified by some of the noblest exhibitions of untainted honour, and devoted friendship, and magnificent generosity, that have ever been recorded of our nature;—you know as well as we, that it was utterly extravagant, and in the face of all observation, to affirm, that each, and every one of its numerous competitors, stood clearly and totally exempted from the sins of an undue selfishness. And, accordingly, there are certain commodious falsehoods occasionally practised in this department of human affairs. There are, for example, certain dexterous and gainful evasions, whereby the payers of tribute are enabled, at times, to make their escape from the eagle eye of the exactors

of tribute. There are even certain contests of ingenuity between individual traders, where in the higgling of a very keen and anxious negociation, each of them is tempted in talking of offers and prices, and the reports of fluctuations in home and foreign markets, to say the things which are not. You must assuredly know, that these, and such as these, then, have introduced a certain quantity of what may be called shuffling, into the communications of the trading world—insomuch, that the simplicity of yea, yea, and nay, nay, is in some degree exploded; there is a kind of understood toleration established for certain modes of expression, which could not, we are much afraid, stand the rigid scrutiny of the great day; and there is an abatement of confidence between man and man, implying, we doubt, such a proportionate abatement of truth, as goes to extend most fearfully the condemnation that is due to all liars, who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. And who can compute the effect of all this on the young and yet unpractised observer? Who does not see, that it must go to reduce the tone of his principles; and to involve him in many a delicate struggle between the morality he has learned from his catechism, and the morality he sees in the counting-house; and to obliterate, in his mind, the distinctions between right and wrong; and, at length, to reconcile his conscience to a sin, which, like every other, deserves the wrath and the curse of God; and to make him tamper with a direct commandment, in such a way, as that falsehoods and frauds might be nothing more in his estimation, than the peccadilloes of an innocent compliance with the current practices and moralities of the world? Here then is a point, at which the way of those who conform to this world, diverges from the way of those peculiar people who are redeemed from all iniquity, and are thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Here is a grievous occasion to fall. Here is a competition between the service of God and the service of Mammon. Here is the exhibition of another offence, and the bringing forward of another temptation, to those who are entering on the business of the world, little adverted to, we fear, by those who live in utter carelessness of their own souls, and never spend a thought or a sigh about the

immortality of others—but most distinctly singled out by the text as a crime of foremost magnitude in the eye of Him who judgeth righteously.

And before we quit the subject of such offences as take place in ordinary trade, let us just advert to one example of it—not so much for the frequency of its occurrence, as for the way that it stands connected in principle with a very general, and, we believe, a very mischievous offence, that takes place in domestic society. It is neither, you will observe, the avarice nor the selfishness of our nature, which forms the only obstruction in the way of one man dealing plainly with another. There is another obstruction, founded on a far more pleasing and amiable principle—even on that delicacy of feeling, in virtue of which, one man cannot bear to wound or to mortify another. It would require, for instance, a very rare, and, certainly, not a very enviable degree of hardihood, to tell another, without pain, that you did not think him worthy of being trusted. And yet, in the doings of merchandise, this is the very trial of delicacy which sometimes offers itself. The man with whom you stand committed to as great an extent as you count to be adviseable, would like, perhaps, to try your confidence in him, and his own credit, with you, a little farther ; and he comes back upon you with a fresh order ; and you secretly have no desire to link any more of your property with his speculation ; and the difficulty is how to get the application in question disposed of ; and you feel that by far the pleasantest way, to all the parties concerned, would be, to make him believe that you refuse the application not because you will not comply, but because you cannot—for that you have no more of the article he wants from you upon hand. And it would only be putting your own soul to hazard, did you personally and by yourself make this communication : but you select, perhaps, as the organ of it some agent or underling of your establishment, who knows it to be false ; and to avoid the soreness of a personal encounter with the man whom you are to disappoint, you devolve the whole business of this lying apology upon others ; and thus do you continue to shift this oppressive burden away from you—or, in other words, to save your

own delicacy, you count not, and you care not, about another's damnation.

Now, what we call upon you to mark, is the perfect identity of principle between this case of making a brother to offend, and another case which obtains, we have heard, to a very great extent among the most genteel and opulent of our city families. In this case, you put a lie into the mouth of a dependent, and that, for the purpose of protecting your substance from such an application as might expose it to hazard or diminution. In the second case, you put a lie into the mouth of a dependent, and that, for the purpose of protecting your time from such an encroachment as you would not feel to be convenient or agreeable. And, in both cases, you are led to hold out this offence by a certain delicacy of temperament, in virtue of which, you can neither give a man plainly to understand, that you are not willing to trust him, nor can you give him to understand that you count his company to be an interruption. But, in both the one and the other example, look to the little account that is made of a brother's or of a sister's eternity; behold the guilty task that is thus unmercifully laid upon one who is shortly to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; think of the entanglement which is thus made to beset the path of a creature who is unperishable. That, at the shrine of Mammon, such a bloody sacrifice should be rendered by some of his unrelenting votaries, is not to be wondered at; but that the shrine of elegance and fashion should be bathed in blood—that soft and sentimental ladyship should put forth her hand to such an enormity—that she who can sigh so gently, and shed her graceful tear over the sufferings of others, should thus be accessary to the second and more awful death of her own domestics—that one who looks the mildest and the loveliest of human beings, should exact obedience to a mandate which carries wrath, and tribulation, and anguish, in its train—O! how it should confirm every Christian in his defiance to the authority of fashion, and lead him to spurn at all its folly, and at all its worthlessness.

And it is quite in vain to say, that the servant whom you thus employ as the deputy of your falsehood, can possibly execute the commission without the conscience being at all tainted or

defiled by it; that a simple cottage maid can so sophisticate the matter, as, without any violence to her original principles, to utter the language of what she assuredly knows to be a downright lie; that she, humble and untutored soul, can sustain no injury when thus made to tamper with the plain English of these realms; that she can at all satisfy herself, how, by the prescribed utterance of "not at home," she is not pronouncing such words as are substantially untrue, but merely using them in another and perfectly understood meaning—and which, according to their modern translation, denote, that the person of whom she is thus speaking, instead of being away from home, is secretly lurking in one of the most secure and intimate of its receptacles. You may try to darken and transform this piece of casuistry as you will; and work up your own minds into the peaceable conviction that it is all right, and as it should be. But be very certain, that where the moral sense of your domestic is not already overthrown, there is, at least one bosom within which you have raised a war of doubts and difficulties; and where, if the victory be on your side, it will be on the side of him who is the great enemy of righteousness. There is, at least, one person along the line of this conveyance of deceit, who condemneth herself in that which she alloweth; who, in the language of Paul, esteeming the practice to be unclean, to her will it be unclean; who will perform her task with the offence of her own conscience, and to whom, therefore, it will indeed be evil: who cannot render obedience in this matter to her earthly superior, but by an act, in which she does not stand clear and unconscious of guilt before God; and with whom, therefore, the sad consequence of what we can call nothing else than a barbarous combination against the principles and the prospects of the lower orders, is—that as she has not cleaved fully unto the Lord, and has not kept by the service of the one master, and has not forsaken all at His bidding, she cannot be the disciple of Christ.

The aphorism, that he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all, tells us something more than of the way in which God adjudges condemnation to the disobedient. It also tells us of the way in which one individual act of sinfulness operates upon our

moral nature. It is altogether an erroneous view of the commandments, to look upon them as so many observances to which we are bound by as many distinct and independent ties of obligation—insomuch, that the transgression of one of them may be brought about by the dissolution of one separate tie, and may leave all the others, with as entire a constraining influence and authority as before. The truth is, that the commandments ought rather to be looked upon as branching out from one great and general tie of obligation; and that there is no such thing as loosening the hold of one of them upon the conscience, but by the unfastening of that tie which binds them all upon the conscience. So that if one member in the system of practical righteousness be made to suffer, all the other members suffer along with it; and if one decision of the moral sense be thwarted, the organ of the moral sense is permanently impaired, and a leaven of iniquity infused into all its other decisions; and if one suggestion of this inward monitor be stifled, a general shock is given to his authority over the whole man; and if one of the least commandments of the law is left unfulfilled, the law itself is brought down from its rightful ascendency; and thus it is, that one act of disobedience may be the commencement and the token of a systematic and universal rebelliousness of the heart against God. It is this which gives such a wide-wasting malignity to each of the separate offences on which we have now expatiated. It is this which so multiplies the means and the possibilities of corruption in the world. It is thus that, at every one point in the intercourse of human society, there may be struck out a fountain of poisonous emanation on all who approach it; and think not, therefore, that under each of the examples we have given, we were only contending for the preservation of one single feature in the character of him who stands exposed to this world's offences. We felt it, in fact, to be a contest for his eternity; and that the case involved in it his general condition with God; and that he who leads the young into a course of dissipation—or that he who tampers with their impressions of sabbath sacredness—or that he who, either in the walks of business, or in the services of the family, makes them the agents of deceitfulness—or that he, in

short, who tempts them to transgress in any one thing, has in fact, poured such a pervading taint into their moral constitution, as to spoil or corrupt them in all things; and that thus, upon one solitary occasion, or by the exhibition of one particular offence, a mischief may be done equivalent to the total destruction of a human soul, or to the blotting out of its prospects for immortality.

And let us just ask a master or a mistress, who can thus make free with the moral principle of their servants in one instance, how they can look for pure or correct principle from them in other instances? What right have they to complain of unfaithfulness against themselves, who have deliberately seduced another into a habit of unfaithfulness against God? Are they so utterly unskilled in the mysteries of our nature, as not to perceive, that if a man gather hardihood enough to break the Sabbath in opposition to his own conscience, this very hardihood will avail him to the breaking of other obligations?—that he whom, for their advantage, they have so exercised, as to fill his conscience with offence towards his God, will not scruple, for his own advantage, so to exercise himself, as to fill his conscience with offence towards his master?—that the servant whom you have taught to lie, has gotten such rudiments of education at your hand, as that, without any further help, he can now teach himself to purloin?—and yet nothing more frequent than loud and angry complainings against the treachery of servants; as if, in the general wreck of their other principles, a principle of consideration for the good and interest of their employer—and who, at the same time, has been their seducer—was to survive in all its power, and all its sensibility. It is just such a retribution as was to be looked for. It is a recoil upon their own heads of the mischief which they themselves have originated. It is the temporal part of the punishment which they have to bear for the sin of our text, but not the whole of it; for the better for them that both person and property were cast into the sea, than that they should stand the reckoning of that day, when called to give an account of the souls that they have murdered, and the blood of so mighty a destruction is required at their hands.

The evil against which we have just protested, is an outrage of far greater enormity than tyrant or oppressor can inflict, in the prosecution of his worst designs against the political rights and liberties of the commonwealth. The very semblance of such designs will summon every patriot to his post of observation; and, from a thousand watch-towers of alarm, will the outcry of freedom in danger be heard throughout the land. But there is a conspiracy of a far more malignant influence upon the destinies of the species that is now going on; and which seems to call forth no indignant spirit, and to bring no generous exclamation along with it. Throughout all the recesses of private and domestic history, there is an ascendency of rank and station against which no stern republican is ever heard to lift his voice—though it be an ascendency so exercised, as to be of most noxious operation to the dearest hopes and best interests of humanity. There is a cruel combination of the great against the majesty of the people—we mean the majesty of the people's worth. There is a haughty unconcern about an inheritance, which, by an unalienable right, should be theirs—we mean their future and everlasting inheritance. There is a deadly invasion made on their rights—we mean their rights of conscience; and, in this our land of boasted privileges, are the low trampled upon by the high—we mean trampled into all the degradation of guilt and worthlessness. They are utterly bereft of that homage which ought to be rendered to the dignity of their immortal nature; and to minister to the avarice of an imperious master, or to spare the sickly delicacy of the fashionables in our land, are the truth and the piety of our population, and all the virtues of their eternity, most unfeelingly plucked away from them. It belongs to others to fight the battle of their privileges in time. But who that looks with a calculating eye on their duration that never ends, can repress an alarm of a higher order? It belongs to others generously to struggle for the place and the adjustment of the lower orders in the great vessel of the state. But, surely, the question of their place in eternity is of mightier concern than how they are to sit and be accommodated in that pathway vehicle which takes them to their everlasting habitations.

Christianity is, in one sense, the greatest of all levellers. It looks to the elements, and not to the circumstantials of humanity; and regarding as altogether superficial and temporary the distinctions of this fleeting pilgrimage, it fastens on those points of assimilation which liken the king upon the throne to the very humblest of his subject population. They are alike in the nakedness of their birth. They are alike in the sureness of their decay. They are alike in the agonies of their dissolution. And after the one is tombed in sepulchral magnificence, and the other is laid in his sod-wrapt grave, are they most fearfully alike in the corruption to which they moulder. But it is with the immortal nature of each that Christianity has to do; and, in both the one and the other, does it behold a nature alike forfeited by guilt, and alike capable of being restored by the grace of an offered salvation. And never do the pomp and the circumstance of externals appear more humiliating, than when, looking onwards to the day of resurrection, we behold the sovereign standing without his crown, and trembling, with the subject by his side at the bar of heaven's majesty. There the master and the servant will be brought to their reckoning together; and when the one is tried upon the guilt and the malignant influence of his Sabbath companies—and is charged with the profane and careless habit of his household establishment—and is reminded how he kept both himself and his domestics from the solemn ordinance—and is made to perceive the fearful extent of the moral and spiritual mischief which he has wrought as the irreligious head of an irreligious family—and how, among other things he, under a system of fashionable hypocrisy, so tampered with another's principles as to defile his conscience, and to destroy him—O! how tremenduously will the little brief authority in which he now plays his fantastic tricks, turn to his own condemnation; for, than thus abuse his authority, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

And how comes it, we ask, that any master is armed with a power so destructive over the immortals who are around him? God has given him no such power: The state has not given it to him. There is no law, either human or divine, by which he

can enforce any order upon his servants to an act of falsehood, or to an act of impiety. Should any such act of authority be attempted on the part of the master, it should be followed up on the part of the servant by an act of disobedience. Should your master or mistress bid you say not at home, when you know that they are at home, it is your duty to refuse compliance with such an order: and if it be asked, how can this matter be adjusted after such a violent and alarming innovation on the laws of fashionable intercourse, we answer, just by the simple substitution of truth for falsehood—just by prescribing the utterance of, engaged, which is a fact, instead of the utterance of, not at home, which is a lie—just by holding the principles of your servant to be of higher account than the false delicacies of your acquaintance—just by a bold and vigorous recurrence to the simplicity of nature—just by determinedly doing what is right, though the example of a whole host were against you; and by giving impulse to the current of example, when it happens to be moving in a proper direction. And here we are happy to say that fashion has of late been making a capricious and accidental movement on the side of principle—and to be blunt, and open, and manly, is now on the fair way to be fashionable—and a temper of a homelier quality is beginning to infuse itself into the luxuriousness, and the effeminacy, and the palling and excessive complaisance of genteel society—and the staple of cultivated manners is improving in firmness, and frankness, and honesty, and may, at length, by the aid of a principle of Christian rectitude, be so interwoven with the cardinal virtues, as to present a different texture altogether from the soft and the silken degeneracy of modern days.

And that we may not appear the champions of an insurrection against the authority of masters, let us further say, that while it is the duty of clerk or apprentice to refuse the doing of week-day work on the Sabbath, and while it is the duty of servants to refuse the utterance of a prescribed falsehood, and while it is the duty of every dependent, in the service of his master, to serve him only in the Lord—yet this very principle, tending as it may to a rare and occasional act of disobedience, is also the principle which renders every servant who adheres to it a per-

fect treasure of fidelity, and attachment, and general obedience. This is the way in which to obtain a credit for his refusal, and to stamp upon it a noble consistency. In this way he will, even to the mind of an ungodly master, make up for all his particularities: and should he be what, if a Christian, he will be; should he be, at all times, the most alert in service, and the most patient of provocation, and the most cordial in affection, and the most scrupulously honest in the charge and custody of all that is committed to him—then let the post of drudgery at which he toils be humble as it may, the contrast between the meanness of his office and the dignity of his character will only heighten the reverence that is due to principle, and make it more illustrious. His scruples may, at first, be the topics of displeasure, and afterwards the topics of occasional levity; but, in spite of himself, will his employer be at length constrained to look upon them with respectful toleration. The servant will be to the master a living epistle of Christ, and he may read there what he has not yet perceived in the letter of the New Testament. He may read, in the person of his own domestic, the power and the truth of Christianity. He may positively stand in awe of his own hired servant—and, regarding his bosom as a sanctuary of worth which it were monstrous to violate, will he feel, when tempted to offer one command of impiety, that he cannot, that he dare not.

And, before we conclude, let us, if possible, try to rebuke the wealthy out of their unfeeling indifference to the souls of the poor, by the example of the Saviour. Let those who look on the immortality of the poor as beneath their concern, only look unto Christ—to him who, for the sake of the poorest of us all, became poor himself, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich. Let them think how the principle of all these offences which we have been attempting to expose, is in the direct face of that principle which prompted, at first, and which still presides over, the whole of the gospel dispensation. Let them learn a higher reverence for the eternity of those beneath them, by thinking of him, who, to purchase an inheritance for the poor, and to provide them with the blessings of a preached gospel, unrobed him of all his greatness; and descended himself

to the lot and the labours of poverty; and toiled, to the beginning of his public ministry at the work of a carpenter; and submitted to all the horrors of a death which was aggravated by the burden of a world's atonement and made inconceivably severe by their being infused into it all the bitter of expiation. Think, O think, when some pêtty design of avarice or vanity would lead you to forget the imperishable souls of those who are beneath you, that you are setting yourselves in diametric opposition to that which lieth nearest to the heart of the Saviour; that you are countervailing the whole tendency of his redemption; that you are thwarting the very object of that enterprise for which all heaven is represented as in motion—and angels are with wonder looking on—and God the Father laid an appointment on the Son of his love—and he, the august personage in whom the magnificent train of prophecy, from the beginning of the world, has its theme and its fulfilment, at length came amongst us, in shrouded majesty, and was led to the cross, like a lamb for the slaughter, and bowed his head in agony, and gave up the ghost.

And here let us address one word more to the masters and mistresses of families. By adopting the reformations to which we have been urging you, you may do good to the cause of Christianity, and yet not advance, by a single hair-breadth, the Christianity of your own souls. It is not by this one reformation, or, indeed, by any given number of reformations, that you are saved. It is by believing in Christ that men are saved. You may escape, it is sure, a higher degree of punishment, but you will not escape damnation. You may do good to the souls of your servants, by a rigid observance of the lesson of this day. But we seek the good of your own souls, also, and we pronounce upon them that they are in a state of death, till one great act be performed, and one act, too, which does not consist of any number of particular acts, or particular reformations. What shall I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. And he who believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him. Do this, if you want to make the great and important transition for yourselves. Do this if you want your own name to be blotted out of the book of condemnation. If you

seek to have your own persons justified before God, submit to the righteousness of God—even that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, and is unto all and upon all who believe. This is the turning point of your acceptance with the Lawgiver. And at this step, also, in the history of your souls, will there be applied to you a power of motive, and will you be endowed with an obedient sensibility to the influence of motive, which will make it the turning point of a new heart and a new character. The particular reformation that we have now been urging will be one of a crowd of other reformations; and, in the spirit of him who pleased not himself, but gave up his life for others, will you forego all the desires of selfishness and vanity, and look not merely to your own things, but also to the things of others.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE LOVE OF MONEY.

JOB xxxi, 24—28.

If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much: If I beheld the sun when it shined or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above.

WHAT is worthy of remark in this passage is, that a certain affection only known among the votaries of Paganism, should be classed under the same character and have the same condemnation with an affection, not only known, but allowed, nay cherished into habitual supremacy, all over Christendom. How universal is it among those who are in pursuit of wealth, to make gold their hope, and among those who are in possession of wealth, to make fine gold their confidence? Yet we are here told that this is virtually as complete a renunciation of God as to practise some of the worst charms of idolatry. And it might perhaps serve to unsettle the vanity of those who, unsuspicious of the disease that is in their hearts, are wholly given over to this world, and wholly without alarm in their anticipations of another,—could we convince them that the most reigning and resistless desire by which they are actuated, stamps the same perversity on them, in the sight of God, as he sees to be in those who are worshippers of the sun in the firmament, or are offering incense to the moon, as the queen of heaven.

We recoil from an idolater, as from one who labours under a

great moral derangement, in suffering his regards to be carried away from the true God to an idol. But, is it not just the same derangement, on the part of man, that he should love any created good, and in the enjoyment of it lose sight of the Creator —that he should delight himself with the use and the possession of a gift, and be unaffected by the circumstance of its having been put into his hands by a giver—that, thoroughly absorbed with the present and the sensible gratification, there should be no room left for the movements of duty or regard to the Being who furnished him with the materials, and endowed him with the organs, of every gratification,—that he should thus lavish all his desires on the surrounding materialism, and fetch from it all his delights, while the thought of him who formed it is habitually absent from his heart—that, in the play of those attractions that subsist between him and the various objects in the neighbourhood of his person, there should be the same want of reference to God, as there is in the play of those attractions which subsist between a piece of unconscious matter and the other matter that is around it—that all the influences which operate upon the human will should emanate from so many various points in the mechanism of what is formed, but that no practical or ascendant influence should come down upon it from the presiding and the preserving Deity? Why, if such be man, he could not be otherwise, though there were no Deity. The part he sustains in the world is the very same that it would have been had the world sprung into being of itself, or without an originating mind had maintained its being from eternity. He just puts forth the evolutions of his own nature, as one of the component individuals in a vast independent system of nature, made up of many parts and many individuals. In hungering for what is agreeable to his senses, or recoiling from what is bitter or unsuitable to them, he does so without thinking of God, or borrowing any impulse to his own will from any thing he knows or believes to be the will of God. Religion has just as little to do with those daily movements of his which are voluntary, as it has to do with the growth of his body, which is involuntary; or, as it has to do, in other words, with the progress and the phenomena of vegetation. With a mind that ought to

know God, and a conscience that ought to award to him the supreme jurisdiction, he lives as effectually without him as if he had no mind and no conscience; and, bating a few transient visitations of thought, and a few regularities of outward and mechanical observation, do we behold man running, and willing, and preparing, and enjoying, just as if there was no other portion than the creature—just as if the world, and its visible elements, formed the all with which he had to do.

I wish to impress upon you the distinction that there is between the love of money, and the love of what money purchases. Either of these affections may equally displace God from the heart. But there is a malignity and an inveteracy of atheism in the former which does not belong to the latter, and in virtue of which it may be seen that the love of money is, indeed, the root of all evil.

When we indulge the love of that which is purchased by money, the materials of gratification and the organs of gratifications are present with each other—just as in the enjoyments of the inferior animals, and just as in all the simple and immediate enjoyments of man; such as the tasting of food, or the smelling of a flower. There is an adaptation of the senses to certain external objects, and there is a pleasure arising out of that adaptation, and it is a pleasure which may be felt by man, along with a right and a full infusion of godliness. The primitive Christians, for example, ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. But, in the case of every unconverted man, the pleasure has no such accompaniment. He carries in his heart no recognition of that hand, by the opening of which it is, that the means and the materials of enjoyment are placed within his reach. The matter of the enjoyment is all with which he is conversant. The Author of the enjoyment is unheeded. The avidity with which he rushes onward to any of the direct gratifications of nature, bears a resemblance to the avidity with which one of the lower creation rushes to its food, or to its water, or to the open field, where it gambols in all the wantonness of freedom, and finds a high-breathed joy in the very strength and velocity of its movements. And the atheism of the former, who has a mind for the sense and knowledge

of his Creator, is often as entire as the atheism of the latter, who has it not. Man, who ought to look to the primary cause of all his blessings, because he is capable of seeing thus far, is often as blind to God, in the midst of enjoyment, as the animal who is not capable of seeing him. He can trace the stream to its fountain; but still he drinks of the stream with as much greediness of pleasure, and as little recognition of its source, as the animal beneath him. In other words, his atheism, while tasting the bounties of Providence, is just as complete, as is the atheism of the inferior animals. But theirs proceeds from their incapacity of knowing God. His proceeds from his not liking to retain God in his knowledge. He may come under the power of godliness, if he would. But he chooses rather that the power of sensuality should lord it over him, and his whole man is engrossed with the objects of sensuality.

But a man differs from an animal in being something more than a sensitive being. He is also a reflective being. He has the power of thought, and inference, and anticipation, to signalize him above the beasts of the field, or of the forest; and yet will it be found, in the case of every natural man, that the exercise of those powers, so far from having carried him nearer, has only widened his departure from God, and given a more deliberate and wilful character to his atheism, than if he had been without them altogether.

In virtue of the powers of mind which belong to him, he can carry his thoughts beyond the present desires and the present gratification. He can calculate on the visitations of future desire, and on the means of its gratification. He cannot only follow out the impulse of hunger that is now upon him; he can look onwards to the successive and recurring impulses of hunger which await him, and he can devise expedients for relieving it. Out of that great stream of supply, which comes direct from Heaven to earth, for the sustenance of all its living generations, he can draw off and appropriate a separate rill of conveyance, and direct it into a reservoir for himself. He can enlarge the capacity, or he can strengthen the embankments of this reservoir. By doing the one, he augments his proportion of this common tide of wealth which circulates through the world, and by

doing the other, he augments his security for holding it in perpetual possession. The animal who drinks out of the stream thinks not whence it issues. But man thinks of the reservoir which yields to him his portion of it. And he looks no further. He thinks not that to fill it, there must be a great and original fountain, out of which there issueth a mighty flood of abundance for the purpose of distribution among all the tribes and families of the world. He stops short at the secondary and artificial fabric which he himself hath formed, and out of which, as from a spring, he draws his own peculiar enjoyments; and never thinks either of his own peculiar supply fluctuating with the variations of the primary spring, or of connecting these variations with the will of the great but unseen director of all things. It is true, that if this main and originating fountain be, at any time, less copious in its emission, he will have less to draw from it to his own reservoir; and in that very proportion will his share of the bounties of Providence be reduced. But still it is to the well, or receptacle, of his own striking out that he looks, as his main security for the relief of nature's wants, and the abundant supply of nature's enjoyments. It is upon his own work that he depends in this matter, and not on the work or the will of him who is the author of nature; who giveth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filleth every heart with food and gladness. And thus it is that the reason of man, and the retrospective power of man, still fail to carry him, by an ascending process to the First Cause. He stops at the instrumental cause, which, by his own wisdom and his own power, he has put into operation. In a word, the man's understanding is over-run with atheism, as well as his desires. The intellectual as well as the sensitive part of his constitution seems to be infected with it. When, like the instinctive and unreflecting animal, he engages in the act of direct enjoyment, he is like it, too, in its atheism. When he rises above the animal, and, in the exercise of his higher and larger faculties, he engages in the act of providing for enjoyment, he still carries his atheism along with him.

A sum of money is, in all its functions, equivalent to such a reservoir. Take one year with another, and the annual consumption of the world cannot exceed the annual produce which

issues from the storehouse of him who is the great and the bountiful Provider of all its families. The money that is in any man's possession represents the share which he can appropriate to himself of this produce. If it be a large sum, it is like a capacious reservoir on the bank of the river of abundance. If it be laid out on firm and stable securities, still it is like a firmly embanked reservoir. The man who toils to increase his money is like a man who toils to enlarge the capacity of his reservoir. The man who suspects a flaw in his securities, or who apprehends, in the report of failures and fluctuations, that his money is all to flow away from him, is like a man who apprehends a flaw in the embankments of his reservoir.

Meanwhile, in all the care that is thus expended, either on the money or on the magazine, the originating source, out of which there is imparted to the one all its real worth, or there is imparted to the other all its real fulness, is scarcely ever thought of. Let God turn the earth into a barren desert, and the money ceases to be convertible to any purpose of enjoyment; or let him lock up that magazine of great and general supply, out of which he showers abundance among our habitations, and all the subordinate magazines formed beside the wonted stream of liberality, would remain empty. But all this is forgotten by the vast majority of our unthoughtful and unreflecting species. The patience of God is still unexhausted; and the seasons still roll in kindly succession over the heads of an ungrateful generation; and that period, when the machinery of of our present system shall stop and be taken to pieces has not yet arrived; and that Spirit, who will not always strive with the children of men, is still prolonging his experiment on the powers and the perversities of our moral nature; and still suspending the edict of dissolution, by which this earth and these heavens are at length to pass away. So that the sun still shines upon us; and the clouds still drop upon us; and the earth still puts forth the bloom and the beauty of its luxuriance; and all the ministers of heaven's liberality still walk their annual round, and scatter plenty over the face of an alienated world; and the whole of nature continues as smiling in promise, and as sure in fulfilment, as in the days of our forefathers; and out of her

large and universal granary is there, in every returning year, as rich a conveyance of aliment as before, to the populous family in whose behalf it is opened. But it is the business of many among that population, each to erect his own separate granary, and to replenish it out of the general store, and to feed himself and his dependents out of it. And he is right in so doing. But he is not right in looking to his own peculiar receptacle, as if it were the first and the emanating fountain of all his enjoyments. He is not right in thus idolising the work of his own hands—awarding no glory and no confidence to him in whose hands is the key of that great storehouse, out of which every lesser storehouse of man derives its fulness. He is not right, in labouring after the money which purchaseth all things, to avert the earnestness of his regards from the Being who provides all things. He is not right, in thus building his security on that which is subordinate, unheeding and unmindful of him who is supreme. It is not right, that silver, and gold, though unshaped into statuary, should still be doing, in this enlightened land, what the images of Paganism once did. It is not right, that they should thus supplant the deference which is owing to the God and the governor of all things—or that each man amongst us should in the secret homage of trust and satisfaction which he renders to his bills, and his deposits, and his deeds of property and possession, endow these various articles with the same moral ascendency over his heart, as the household gods of antiquity had over the idolaters of antiquity—making them as effectually usurp the place of the divinity, and dethrone the one Monarch of heaven and earth from that pre-eminence of trust and of affection that belongs to him.

He who makes a god of his pleasure, renders to this idol the homage of his senses. He who makes a god of his wealth, renders to this idol the homage of his mind; and he, therefore, of the two, is the more hopeless and determined idolater. The former is goaded on to his idolatry, by the power of appetite. The latter cultivates his with wilful and deliberate perseverance; consecrates his very highest powers to its service; embarks in it, not with the heat of passion, but with the coolness of steady and calculating principle; fully gives up his reason

and his time, and all the faculties of his understanding, as well as all the desires of his heart, to the great object of a fortune in this world; makes the acquirement of gain the settled *aim*, and the prosecution of that aim the settled habit of his existence; sits the whole day long at the post of his ardent and unremitting devotions; and, as he labours at the desk of his counting-house, has his soul just as effectually seduced from the living God to an object distinct from him, and contrary to him, as if the ledger over which he was bending was a book of mystical characters, written in honour of some golden idol placed before him, and with a view to render this idol propitious to himself and to his family. Baal and Moloch were not more substantially the gods of rebellious Israel, than Mammon is the god of all his affections. To the fortune he has reared, or is rearing, for himself and his descendants, he ascribes all the power and all the independence of a divinity. With the wealth he has gotten by his own hands, does he feel himself as independent of God, as the Pagan does, who, happy in the fancied protection of an image made with his own hand, suffers no disturbance to his quiet, from any thought of the real but the unknown Deity. His confidence is in his treasure, and not in God. It is there that he places all his safety and all his sufficiency. It is not on the Supreme Being, conceived in the light of a real and a personal agent, that he places his dependence. It is on a mute and material statue of his own erection. It is wealth, which stands to him in the place of God—to which he awards the credit of all his enjoyments—which he looks to as the emanating fountain of all his present sufficiency—from which he gathers his fondest expectations of all the bright and fancied blessedness that is yet before him—on which he rest as the firmest and stablest foundation of all that the heart can wish, or the eye can long after, both for himself and for his children. It matters not for him, that all his enjoyment comes from a primary fountain, and that his wealth is only an intermediate reservoir. It matters not to him, that, if God were to set a seal upon the upper storehouse in heaven, or to blast and to burn up all the fruitfulness of earth, he would reduce, to the worthlessness of dross, all the silver and the gold that abound

in it. Still the gold and the silver are his gods. His own fountain is between him and the fountain of original supply. His wealth is between him and God. Its various lodging places, whether in the bank, or in the place of registration, or in the depository of wills and title-deeds—these are the sanctuaries of his secret worship—these are the highplaces of his adoration; and never did the devout Israelite look with more intentness towards Mount Zion, and with his face towards Jerusalem, than he does to his wealth, as to the mountain and strong hold of his security. Nor could the Supreme be more effectually deposed from the homage of trust and gratitude than he actually is, though this wealth were recalled from its various investments; and turned into one mass of gold; and cast into a piece of molten statuary; and enshrined on a pedestal, around which all his household might assemble, and make it the object of their family devotions; and plied every hour of every day with all the fooleries of a senseless and degrading Paganism. It is thus, that God may keep up the charge of idolatry against us, even after all its images have been overthrown. It is thus that dissuasive from idolatry are still addressed, in the New Testament, to the pupils of a new and better dispensation; that little children are warned against idols; and all of us are warned to flee from covetousness, which is idolatry.

To look no further than to fortune as the dispenser of all the enjoyments which money can purchase, is to make that fortune stand in the place of God. It is to make sense shut out faith, and to rob the King eternal and invisible of that supremacy, to which all the blessings of human existence, and all the varieties of human condition, ought, in every instance, and in every particular, to be referred. But, as we have already remarked, the love of money is one affection, and the love of what is purchased by money is another. It was at first, we have no doubt, loved for the sake of the good things which it enabled its possessor to acquire. But whether, as the result of associations in the mind so rapid as to escape the notice of our own consciousness—or as the fruit of an infection running by the sympathy among all men busily engaged in the prosecution of wealth, as the supreme good of their being—certain it is, that

money, originally pursued for the sake of other things, comes at length to be prized for its own sake. And, perhaps, there is no one circumstance which serves more to liken the love of money to the most irrational of the heathen idolatries, than that it at length passes into the love of money for itself; and acquires a most enduring power over the human affections, separately altogether from the power of purchase and of command which belongs to it, over the proper and original objects of human desire.—The first thing which set man agoing in the pursuit of wealth, was that, through it, as an intervening medium, he found his way to other enjoyments; and it proves him, as we have observed, capable of a higher reach of anticipation than the beast of the field, or the fowls of the air, that he is thus able to calculate, and to foresee, and to build up a provision for the wants of futurity. But, mark how soon this boasted distinction of his faculties is overthrown, and how near to each other lie the dignity and the debasement of the human understanding. If it evinced a loftier mind in man than in the inferior animals, that he invented money, and by the acquisition of it can both secure abundance for himself, and transmit this abundance to the future generations of his family—what have we to offer, in vindication of this intellectual eminence, when we witness how soon it is, that the pursuit of wealth ceases to be rational?—How, instead of being prosecuted as an instrument, either for the purchase of ease, or the purchase of enjoyment, both the ease and enjoyment of a whole life are rendered up as sacrifices at its shrine?—How, from being sought after as a minister of gratification to the appetites of nature, it at length brings nature into bondage, and robs her of all her simple delights, and pours the infusion of wormwood into the currency of her feelings?—making that man sad who ought to be cheerful, and that man who ought to rejoice in his present abundance, filling him either with the cares of an ambition which never will be satisfied, or with the apprehensions of a distress which in all its pictured and exaggerated evils, will never be realised. And it is wonderful, it is passing wonderful, that wealth, which derives all that is true and sterling in its worth from its subserviency to other advantages, should apart from all thought about this sub-

serviency, be made the object of such fervent and fatiguing devotion. Insomuch, that never did Indian devotee inflict upon himself a severer agony at the footstool of his Paganism, than those devotees of wealth who, for its acquirement as their ultimate object, will forego all the uses for which alone it is valuable—will give up all that is genuine or tranquil in the pleasures of life; and will pierce themselves through with many sorrows; and will undergo all the fiercer tortures of the mind; and, instead of employing what they have, to smooth their passage through the world, will, upon the hazardous sea of adventure, turn the whole of this passage into a storm—thus exalting wealth, from a servant unto a lord, who in return for the homage that he obtains from his worshippers, exercises them, like Rehoboam his subjects of old, not with whips but with scorpions—with consuming anxiety, with never-sated desire, with brooding apprehension, and its frequent and ever-flitting spectres, and the endless jealousies of competition with men as intently devoted, and as emulous of a high place in the temple of their common idolatry, as themselves. And, without going to the higher exhibitions of this propensity, in all its rage and in all its restlessness, we have only to mark its workings on the walk of even and every-day citizenship; and there see, how, in the hearts even of its most common-place votaries, wealth is followed after, for its own sake; how, unassociated with all for which reason pronounces it to be of estimation, but, in virtue of some mysterious and undefinable charm, operating not on any principle of the judgment, but on the utter perversity of judgment, money has come to be of higher account than all that is purchased by money, and has attained a rank co-ordinate with that which our Saviour assigns to the life and to the body of man, in being reckoned more than meet and more than raiment. Thus making that which is subordinate to be primary, and that which is primary subordinate; transferring, by a kind of fascination, the affections away from wealth in use, to wealth in idle and unemployed possession—insomuch, that the most welcome intelligence you could give to the proprietor of many a snug deposit, in some place of secure and progressive accumulation, would be, that he should never require any part either of it or

of its accumulation back again for the purpose of expenditure —and that, to the end of his life, every new year should witness another unimpaired addition to the bulk or the aggrandizement of his idol. And it would just heighten his enjoymont could he be told, with prophetic certainty, that this process of undisturbed augmentation would go on with his children's children, to the last age of the world; that the economy of each succeeding race of descendants would leave the sum with its interest untouched, and the place of its sanctuary unviolated; and, that through a series of indefinite generations, would the magnitude ever grow, and the lustre ever brighten, of that household god, which he had erected for his own senseless adoration, and bequeathed as an object of as senseless adoration to his family.

We have the authority of that word which has been pronounced a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that it cannot have two masters, or that there is not room in it for two great and ascendant affections. The engrossing power of one such affection is expressly affirmed of the love for Mammon or the love for money thus named and characterised as an idol. Or, in other words, if the love of money be in the heart, the love of God is not there. If a man be trusting in uncertain riches, he is not trusting in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. If his heart be set upon covetousness, it is set upon an object of idolatry. The true divinity is moved away from his place, and, worse than atheism, which would only leave it empty, has the love of wealth raised another divinity upon his throne. So that covetousness offers a more daring and positive aggression on the right and territory of the godhead, than even infidelity. The latter would only desolate the sanctuary of heaven; the former would set up an abomination in the midst of it. It not only strips God of love and of confidence, which are his prerogatives, but it transfers them to another. And little does the man who is proud in honour, but, at the same time, proud and peering in ambition—little does he think, that, though acquitted in the eye of all his fellows, there still remains an atrocity of a deeper character, than even that of atheism, with which he is chargeable. Let him just take an account of his mind, amid the labours of his merchandise, and

he will find that the living God has no ascendency there; but that wealth just as much as if personified into life, and agency, and power, wields over him all the ascendency of God. Where his treasure is, his heart is also; and, linking as he does his main hope with its increase, and his main fear with its fluctuations and its failures, he has effectually dethroned the Supreme from his heart, and deified an usurper in his room, as if fortune had been embodied into a goddess, and he were in the habit of repairing, with a crowd of other worshippers, to her temple. She, in fact, is the dispenser of that which he chiefly prizes in existence. A smile from her is worth all the promises of the Eternal, and her threatening frown more dreadful to the imagination than all his terrors.

And the disease is as near to universal as it is virulent. Wealth is the goddess whom all the world worshippeth. There is many a city in our empire, of which with an eye of apostolical discernment, it may be seen, that it is almost wholly given over to idolatry. If a man look no higher than to his money for his enjoyments, then money is his god. It is the god of his dependence, and the god upon whom his heart is staid. Or if, apart from other enjoyments it, by some magical power of its own, has gotten the ascendency, then still it is followed after as the supreme good; and there is an actual supplanting of the living God. He is robbed of the gratitude that we owe him for our daily sustenance; for, instead of receiving it as if it came direct out of his hand, we receive it as if it came from the hand of a secondary agent, to whom we ascribe all the stability and independence of God. This wealth, in fact, obscures to us the character of God, as the real though unseen Author of our various blessings; and as if by a material intervention does it hide from the perception of nature, the hand which feeds, and clothes, and maintains us in life, and in all the comforts and necessaries of life. It just has the effect of thickening still more that impalpable veil which lies between God and the eye of the senses. We lose all discernment of him as the giver of our comforts; and coming, as they appear to do, from that wealth which our fancies have raised into a living personification, does this idol stand before us, not as a deputy but as a substitute for

that Being, with whom it is that we really have to do. All this goes both to widen and to fortify that disruption which has taken place between God and the world. It adds the power of one great master idol to the seducing influence of all the lesser idolatries. When the liking and the confidence of men are towards money, there is no direct intercourse, either by the one or the other of these affections towards God; and, in proportion as he sends forth his desires, and rests his security on the former, in that very proportion does he renounce God as his hope, and God as his dependence.

And to advert, for one moment, to the misery of this affection, as well as to its sinfulness. He, over whom it reigns, feels a worthlessness in his present wealth, after it is gotten; and when to this we add the restlessness of a yet unsated appetite, lording it over all his convictions, and panting for more; when, to the dulness of his actual satisfaction in all the riches that he has, we add his still unquenched, and, indeed unquenchable desire for the riches that he has not; when we reflect that as, in the pursuit of wealth, he widens the circle of his operation, so he lengthens out the line of his open and hazardous exposure, and multiplies, along the extent of it, those vulnerable points from which another and another dart of anxiety may enter into his heart; when he feels himself as if floating on an ocean of contingency, on which, perhaps, he is only borne up by the breath of a credit that is fictitious, and which, liable to burst every moment, may leave him to sink under the weight of his overladen speculation; when suspended on the doubtful result of his bold and uncertain adventure, he dreads the tidings of disaster in every arrival, and lives in a continual agony of feeling, kept up by the crowd and turmoil of his manifold distractions, and so overspreading the whole compass of his thoughts, as to leave not one narrow space for the thought of eternity;—will any beholder just look to the mind of this unhappy man, thus tost and bewildered and thrown into a general unceasing frenzy, made out of many fears and many agitations, and not to say, that the bird of the air, which sends forth its unreflecting song, and lives on the fortuitous bounty of Providence, is not higher in the scale of enjoyment than he? And how much more, then, the

quiet Christian beside him, who, in possession of food and raiment has that godliness with contentment which is great gain —who with the peace of heaven in his heart, and the glories of heaven in his eye, has found out the true philosophy of existence; has sought a portion where alone a portion can be found, and, in bidding away from his mind the love of money, has bidden away all the cross and all the carefulness along with it.

Death will soon break up every swelling enterprise of ambition, and put upon it a most cruel and degrading mockery. And it is, indeed an affecting sight, to behold the workings of this world's infatuation among so many of our fellow mortals nearing and nearing every day to eternity, and yet, instead of taking heed to that which is before them, mistaking their temporary vehicle for their abiding home—and spending all their time and all their thought upon its accommodations. It is all the doing of our great adversary, thus to invest the trifles of a day in such characters of greatness and durability; and it is, indeed, one of the most formidable of his wiles. And whatever may be the instrument of reclaiming men from this delusion, it certainly is not any argument either about the shortness of life, or the certainty and awfulness of its approaching termination. On this point man is capable of a stout-hearted resistance, even to ocular demonstration; nor do we know a more striking evidence of the bereavement which must have passed upon the human faculties, than to see how, in despite of arithmetic,—how, in despite of manifold experience,—how, in despite of all his gathering wrinkles, and all his growing infirmities—how, in despite of the ever-lessening distance between him and his sepulchre, and of all the tokens of preparation for the onset of the last messenger, with which, in the shape of weakness, and breathlessness, and dimness of eyes, he is visited; will the feeble and asthmatic man still shake his silver locks in all the glee and transport of which he is capable, when he hears of his gainful adventures, and his new accumulations. Nor can we tell how near he must get to his grave, or how far on he must advance in the process of dying, ere gain cease to delight, and the idol of wealth cease to be dear to him. But when we see

that the topic is trade and its profits, which lights up his faded eye with the glow of its chiefest ecstacy, we are as much satisfied that he leaves the world with all his treasure there, and all the desires of his heart there, as if acting what is told of the miser's death-bed, he made his bills and his parchments of security the companions of his bosom, and the last movements of his life were a fearful, tenacious, determined grasp, of what to him formed the all for which life was valuable.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH,

BEFORE

THE SOCIETY

FOR THE

RELIEF OF THE DESTITUTE SICK,

APRIL 18, 1813.

BY THOMAS CHALMERS,

MINISTER OF THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW.

SERMON.

PSALM xli. 1.

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble."

THERE is an evident want of congeniality between the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom of the Christian. The term "wisdom," carries my reverence along with it. It brings before me a grave and respectable character, whose rationality predominates over the inferior principles of his constitution, and to whom I willingly yield that peculiar homage which the enlightened, and the judicious, and the manly, are sure to exact from a surrounding neighbourhood. Now, so long as this wisdom has for its object some secular advantage, I yield it an unqualified reverence. It is a reverence which all understand, and all sympathize with. If, in private life, a man be wise in the management of his farm, or his fortune, or his family; or if, in public life, he have wisdom to steer an empire through all its difficulties, and to carry it to aggrandizement and renown—the respect which I feel for such wisdom as this, is most cordial and entire, and supported by the universal acknowledgment of all whom I call to attend to it.

Let me now suppose that this wisdom has changed its object—that the man whom I am representing to exemplify this respectable attribute, instead of being wise for time, is wise for eternity—that he labours by the faith and sanctification of the gospel for unperishable honours—that, instead of listening to him with admiration at his sagacity, as he talks of business, or politics, or agriculture, we are compelled to listen to him talking of the hope within the veil, and of Christ being the power

of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation. What becomes of your respect for him now? Are there not some of you who are quite sensible that this respect is greatly impaired, since the wisdom of the man has taken so unaccountable a change in its object and in its direction? The truth is, that the greater part of the world feel no respect at all for a wisdom which they do not comprehend. They may love the innocence of a decidedly religious character, but they feel no sublime or commanding sentiment of veneration for its wisdom. All the truth of the Bible, and all the grandeur of eternity, will not redeem it from a certain degree of contempt. Terms which lower, undervalue, and degrade, suggest themselves to the mind; and strongly dispose it to throw a mean and disagreeable colouring over the man who, sitting loose to the objects of the world, has become altogether a Christian. It is needless fo expatiate; but what I have seen myself, and what must have fallen under the observation of many whom I address, carry in them the testimony of experience to the assertion of the Apostle, "that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."

Now, what I have said of the respectable attribute of wisdom, is applicable, with almost no variation, to another attribute of the human character, to which I would assign the gentler epithet of "lovely." The attribute to which I allude, is that of benevolence. This is the burden of every poet's song, and every eloquent and interesting enthusiast gives it his testimony. I speak not of the enthusiasm of methodists and devotees—I speak of that enthusiasm of fine sentiment which embellishes the pages of elegant literature, and is addressed to all her sighing and amiable votaries, in the various forms of novel, and poetry, and dramatic entertainment. You would think if any thing could bring the Christian at one with the world around him, it would be this; and that in the ardent benevolence which figures in novels, and sparkles in poetry, there would be an entire congeniality with the benevolence of the gospel. I venture to say, however, that there never existed a stronger repulsion between two contending sentiments, than between the benevolence of the Christian, and the benevolence

which is the theme of elegant literature—that the one, with all its accompaniments of tears, and sensibilities, and interesting cottages, is neither felt nor understood by the Christian as such; and the other, with its work and labours of love—its *enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*, and its living not to itself, but to the will of Him who died for us, and who rose again, is not only not understood, but positively nauseated, by the poetical *amateur*.

But the contrast does not stop here. The benevolence of the gospel is not only at antipodes with the visionary sons and daughters of poetry, but it even varies in some of its most distinguishing features with the experimental benevolence of real and familiar life. The fantastic benevolence of poetry is now indeed pretty well exploded; and, in the more popular works of the age, there is a benevolence of a far truer and more substantial kind substituted in its place—the benevolence which you meet with among men of business and observation—the benevolence which bustles and finds employment among the most public and ordinary scenes, and which seeks for objects, not where the flower blows loveliest, and the stream, with its gentle murmurs, falls sweetest on the ear, but finds them in his every day walks—goes in quest of them through the heart of the great city, and is not afraid to meet them in its most putrid lanes and loathsome receptacles.

Now, it must be ackowledged, that this benevolence is of a far more respectable kind than that poetic sensibility, which is of no use, because it admits of no application. Yet I am not afraid to say, that, respectable as it is, it does not come up to the benevolence of the Christian, and is at variance, in some of its most capital ingredients, with the morality of the gospel. It is well, and very well, as far as it goes; and that Christian is wanting to the will of his master who refuses to share and go along with it. The Christian will do all this, but he would like to do more; and it is at the precise point where he proposes to do more, that he finds himself abandoned by the co-operation and good wishes of those who had hitherto supported him. The Christian goes as far as the votary of this useful benevolence, but then he would like to go further, and this is the point at

which he is mortified to find that his old coadjutors refuse to go along with him; and that instead of being strengthened by their assistance, he has their contempt and their ridicule; or, at all events their total want of sympathy, to contend with.

The truth is, that the benevolence I allude to, with all its respectable air of business and good sense, is altogether a secular benevolence. Through all the extent of its operations, it carries in it no reference to the eternal duration of its object. Time, and the accommodations of time, form all its subject and all its exercise. It labours, and often with success, to provide for its object a warm and well-sheltered tenement, but it looks not beyond the few little years when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved—when the soul shall be driven from its perishable tenement, and the only benevolence it will acknowledge or care for, will be the benevolence of those who have directed it to a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This, then, is the point at which the benevolence of the gospel separates from that worldly benevolence, to which, as far as it goes, I offer my cheerful and unmingled testimony. The one minds earthly things, the other has its conversation in heaven. Even when the immediate object of both is the same, you will generally perceive an evident distinction in the principle. Individuals, for example, may co-operate, and will often meet in the same room, be members of the same society, and go hand in hand cordially together for the education of the poor. But the forming habits of virtuous industry, and good members of society, which are the sole consideration in the heart of the worldly philanthropist, are but mere accessions in the heart of the Christian. The main impulse of his benevolence lies in furnishing the poor with the means of enjoying that bread of life which came down from heaven, and in introducing them to the knowledge of those scriptures which are the power of God unto salvation to every one who believeth. Now, it is so far a blessing to the world that there is a co-operation in the immediate object. But what I contend for, is, that there is a total want of congeniality in the principle—that the moment you strip the institution of its temporal advantages, and make it repose on the naked grandeur of eternity, it is fallen from, or

laughed at as one of the chimeras of fanaticism, and left to the despised efforts of those whom they esteem to be unaccountable people, who subscribe for missions, and squander their money on Bible societies. Strange effect, you would think, of eternity to degrade the object with which it is connected! But so it is. The blaze of glory, which is thrown around the martyrdom of a patriot or a philosopher, is refused to the martyrdom of a Christian. When a statesman dies, who lifted his intrepid voice for the liberty of the species, we hear of nothing but of the shrines and the monuments of immortality. Put into his place one of those sturdy reformers, who, unmoved by councils and inquisitions, stood up for the religious liberties of the world; and it is no sooner done, than the full tide of congenial sympathy and admiration is at once arrested. We have all heard of the benevolent apostleship of Howard, and what Christian will be behind his fellows with his applauding testimony? But will they, on the other hand, share his enthusiasm when he tells them of the apostleship of Paul, who, in the sublimer sense of the term, accomplished the liberty of the captive, and brought them that sat in darkness out of the prison-house? Will they share in the holy benevolence of the apostle when he pours out his ardent effusions in behalf of his countrymen? They were at that time on the eve of the cruelest sufferings. The whole vengeance of the Roman power was mustering to bear upon them. The seige and destruction of their city form one of the most dreadful tragedies in the history of war. Yet Paul seems to have had another object in his eye. It was their souls and their eternity which engrossed him. Can you sympathise with him in this principle, or join in kindred benevolence with him, when he says, that "my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved?"

But to bring my list of examples to a close, the most remarkable of them all may be collected from the history of the present attempts which are now making to carry the knowledge of divine revelation into the Pagan and uncivilized countries of the world. Now, it may be my ignorance, but I am certainly not aware of the fact, that without a book of religious faith—without religion, in fact, being the errand and occasion, we have

never been able in modern times so far to compel the attentions and to subdue the habits of savages, as to throw in among them the use and possession of a written language. Certain it is, however, at all events, that this very greatest step in the process of converting a wild man of the woods into a humanized member of society, has been accomplished by christian missionaries. They have put into the hands of barbarians this mighty instrument of a written language, and they have taught them how to use it.* They have formed an orthography for wandering and untutored savages. They have given a shape and a name to their barbarous articulations; and the children of men, who lived on the prey of the wilderness, are now forming in village schools to the arts and the decencies of cultivated life. Now, I am not involving you in the controversy whether civilization should precede Christianity, or Christianity should precede civilization. It is not to what has been said on the subject, but to what has been done that we are pointing your attention. We appeal to the fact; and as an illustration of the principle we have been attempting to lay before you, we call upon you to mark the feelings, and the countenance, and the language, of the mere academic moralist, when you put into his hand the authentic and proper document where the fact is recorded—we mean a missionary report, or a missionary magazine. We know that there are men who have so much of the firm nerve and hardihood of philosophy about them, as not to be repelled from truth in whatever shape, or from whatever quarter it comes to them. But there are others of a humbler cast, who have transferred their homage from the omnipotence of truth, to the omnipotence of a name, who, because missionaries,

* As, for instance Mr. John Elliot, and the Moravian brethren among the Indians of New-England and Pennsylvania; the Moravians of South America; Mr. Hans Egede, and the Moravians in Greenland; the latter in Labradore, among the Eskimaux; the missionaries of Otaheite, and other South Sea islands, and Mr. Brunton, under the patronage of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, who reduced the language of the Susoos, a nation on the coast of Africa, to writing and grammatical form, and printed in it a spelling-book, vocabulary, catechism, and some tracts. Other instances besides might be given.

while they are accomplishing the civilization are labouring also for the eternity of savages, have lifted up the cry of fanaticism against them—who, because missionaries revere the word of God, and utter themselves in the language of the New Testament, nauseate every word that comes from them as overrun with the flavour and phraseology of methodism—who, are determined, in short, to abominate all that is missionary, and suffer the very sound of the epithet to fill their minds with an overwhelming association of repugnance, and prejudice, and disgust.

We would not have counted this so remarkable an example, had it not been that missionaries are accomplishing the very object on which the advocates for civilization love to expatiate. They are working for the temporal good far more effectually than any adventurer in the cause ever did before; but mark the want of congeniality between the benevolence of this world, and the benevolence of the Christian; they incur contempt, because they are working for the spiritual and eternal good also. Nor do the earthly blessings which they scatter so abundantly in their way, redeem from scorn the purer and the nobler principle which inspires them.

These observations seem to be an applicable introduction to the subject before us. I call your attention to *the way* in which the Bible enjoins us to take up the care of the poor. It does not say, in the text before us, Commiserate the poor; for, if it said no more than this, it would leave their necessities to be provided for by the random ebulitions of an impetuous and unreflecting sympathy. It provides them with a better security than the mere feeling of compassion—a feeling which, however useful for the purpose of excitement, must be controlled and regulated. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object. At all events, Time is the little circle within which it in general expatiates. It needs the impression of sensible objects to sustain it; nor can it enter with zeal or with vivacity into the wants of the abstract and invisi-

ble soul. The Bible, then, instead of leaving the relief of the poor to the mere instinct of sympathy, makes it a subject for *consideration*—Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor—a grave and prosaic exercise I do allow, and which makes no figure in those high wrought descriptions, where the exquisite tale of benevolence is made up of all the sensibilities of tenderness on the one hand, and of all the ecstacies of gratitude on the other. The Bible rescues the cause from the mischief to which a heedless or unthinking sensibility would expose it. It brings it under the cognizance of a higher faculty—a faculty of steadier operation than to be weary in well-doing, and of sturdier endurance than to give it up in disgust. It calls you to *consider* the poor. It makes the virtue of relieving them a matter of computation as well as of sentiment; and in so doing, it puts you beyond the reach of the various delusions by which you are at one time led to prefer the indulgence of pity to the substantial interest of its object; at another, are led to retire chagrined and disappointed from the scene of duty, because you have not met with the gratitude or the honesty that you laid your account with; at another, are led to expend all your anxieties upon the accommodation of time, and to overlook eternity. It is the office of *consideration* to save you from all these fallacies. Under its tutorage attention to the wants of the poor ripens into principle. I want, my brethren, to press its advantages upon you, for I can in no other way recommend the society whose claims I am appointed to lay before you, so effectually to your patronage. My time will only permit me to lay before you, a few of their advantages, and I shall therefore confine myself to two leading particulars.

I. The man who considers the poor, instead of slumbering over the emotions of a useless sensibility, among those imaginary beings whom poetry and romance have laid before him in all the elegance of fictitious history, will bestow the labour and the attention of actual business among the poor of the real and the living world. Benevolence is the burden of every romantic tale, and of every poet's song. It it is dressed out in all the fairy enchantments of imagery and eloquence. All is beauty to the eye and music to the ear. Nothing seen but pictures of

felicity, and nothing heard but the soft whispers of gratitude and affection. The reader is carried along by this soft and delightful representation of virtue. He accompanies his hero through all the fancied varieties of his history. He goes along with him to the cottage of poverty and disease, surrounded, as we may suppose, with all the charms of rural obscurity, and where the murmurs of an adjoining rivulet accord with the finer and more benevolent sensibilities of the mind. He enters this enchanting retirement, and meets with a picture of distress, adorned in all the elegance of fiction. Perhaps a father laid on a bed of languishing, and supported by the labours of a pious and affectionate family, where kindness breathes in every word, and anxiety sits upon every countenance—where the industry of his children struggles in vain to supply the cordials which his poverty denies him—where nature sinks every hour, and all feel a gloomy foreboding, which they strive to conceal, and tremble to express. The hero of romance enters, and the glance of his benevolent eye enlightens this darkest recess of misery. He turns him to the bed of languishing, tells the sick man that there is still hope, and smiles comfort on his despairing children. Day after day, he repeats his kindness and his charity. They hail his approach as the footsteps of an angel of mercy. The father lives to bless his deliverer. The family reward his benevolence by the homage of an affectionate gratitude; and, in the piety of their evening prayer, offer up thanks to the God of heaven, for opening the hearts of the rich to kindly and beneficent attentions. The reader weeps with delight. The visions of paradise play before his fancy. His tears flow, and his heart dissolves in all the luxury of tenderness.

Now, we do not deny that the members of the Destitute Sick Society *may* at times have met with some such delightful scene to soothe and encourage them. But put the question to any of their visiters, and he will not fail to tell you, that if they had never moved but when they had something like this to excite and to gratify their hearts, they would seldom have moved at all; and their usefulness to the poor would have been reduced to a very humble fraction of what they have actually done for them. What is this but to say, that it is the business of a re-

ligious instructor to give you, not the elegant, but the true representation of benevolence—to represent it not so much as a luxurious indulgence to the finer sensibilities of the mind, but according to the sober declaration of Scripture, as a work and as a labour—as a business in which you must encounter vexation, opposition, and fatigue ; where you are not always to meet with that elegance, which allures the fancy, or with that humble and retired adversity, which interests the more tender propensities of the heart ; but as a business where reluctance must often be overcome by a sense of duty and where, though oppressed at every step, by envy, disgust, and disappointment, you are bound to persevere, in obedience to the law of God, and the sober instigation of principle.

The benevolence of the gospel lies in actions. The benevolence of our fictitious writers, in a kind of high-wrought delicacy of feeling and sentiment. The one dissipates all its fervour in sighs and tears, and idle aspirations—the other reserves its strength for efforts and execution. The one regards it as a luxurious enjoyment for the heart—the other, as a work and business for the hand. The one sits in indolence, and broods, in visionary rapture, over its schemes of ideal philanthropy—the other steps abroad, and enlightens by its presence, the dark and pestilential hovels of disease. The one wastes away in empty ejaculation—the other gives time and trouble to the work of beneficence—gives education to the orphan—provides clothes for the naked, and lays food on the table of the hungry. The one is indolent and capricious, and often does mischief by the occasional overflowings of a whimsical and ill-directed charity—the other is vigilant and discerning, and takes care lest his distributions be injudicious, and the effort of benevolence be misapplied. The one is soothed with the luxury of feeling, and reclines in easy and indolent satisfaction—the other shakes off the deceitful langour of contemplation and solitude, and delights in a scene of activity. Remember, that virtue, in general, is not to feel, but to do ; not merely to conceive a purpose, but to carry that purpose into execution ; not merely to be overpowered by the impression of a sentiment, but to practise what it loves, and to imitate what it admires.

To be benevolent in speculation, is often to be selfish in action and in reality. The vanity and the indolence of man delude him into a thousand inconsistencies. He professes to love the name and the semblance of virtue, but the labour of exertion and of self-denial terrifies him from attempting it. The emotions of kindness are delightful to his bosom, but then they are little better than a selfish indulgence—they terminate in his own enjoyment—they are a mere refinement of luxury. His eye melts over the picture of fictitious distress, while not a tear is left for the actual starvation and misery with which he is surrounded. It is easy to indulge the imaginations of a visionary heart in going over a scene of fancied affliction, because here there is no sloth to overcome—no avaricious propensity to control—no offensive or disgusting circumstance to allay the unmingled impression of sympathy which a soft and elegant picture is calculated to awaken. It is not so easy to be benevolent in action and in reality, because here there is fatigue to undergo—there is time and money to give—there is the mortifying spectacle of vice, and folly, and ingratitude, to encounter. We like to give you the fair picture of love to man, because to throw over it false and fictitious embellishments, is injurious to its cause. These elevate the fancy by romantic visions which can never be realized. They embitter the heart by the most severe and mortifying disappointments, and often force us to retire in disgust from what heaven has intended to be the theatre of our discipline and preparation. Take the representation of the Bible. Benevolence is a work and a labour. It often calls for the severest efforts of vigilance and industry—a habit of action not to be acquired in the school of fine sentiment, but in the walks of business, in the dark and dismal receptacles of misery—in the hospitals of disease—in the putrid lanes of great cities, where poverty dwells in lank and ragged wretchedness, agonized with pain, faint with hunger, and shivering in a frail and unsheltered tenement.

You are not to conceive yourself a real lover of your species, and entitled to the praise or the reward of benevolence because you weep over a fictitious representation of human misery. A man may weep in the indolence of a studious and contemplative

retirement; he may breathe all the tender aspirations of humanity; but what avails all this warm and diffusive benevolence, if it is never exerted—if it never rise to execution—if it never carry him to the accomplishment of a single benevolent purpose—if it shrink from activity, and sicken at the pain of fatigue? It is easy, indeed, to come forward with the cant and hypocrisy of fine sentiment—to have a heart trained to the emotions of benevolence, while the hand refuses the labours of discharging its offices—to weep for amusement, and to have nothing to spare for human suffering but the tribute of an indolent and unmeaning sympathy. Many of you must be acquainted with that corruption of Christian doctrine, which has been termed Antinomianism. It professes the highest reverence for the Supreme Being, while it refuses obedience to the lessons of his authority. It professes the highest gratitude for the sufferings of Christ, while it refuses that course of life and action, which he demands of his followers. It professes to adore the tremendous Majesty of heaven, and to weep in shame and in sorrow over the sinfulness of degraded humanity, while every day it insults Heaven by the enormity of its misdeeds, and evinces the insincerity of its wilful perseverance in the practice of iniquity. This Antinomianism is generally condemned; and none reprobate it more than the votaries of fine sentiment—your men of taste and elegant literature—your epicures of feeling, who riot in all the luxury of theatrical emotion, and who, in their admiration of what is tender, and beautiful, and cultivated, have always turned with disgust from the doctrines of a sour and illiberal theology. We may say to such, as Nathan to David, "Thou art the man." Theirs is to all intents and purposes Antinomianism—and an Antinomianism of a far more dangerous and deceitful kind, than the Antinomianism of a spurious and pretended orthodoxy. In the Antinomianism of religion, there is nothing to fascinate or deceive you. It wears an air of repulsive bigotry, more fitted to awaken disgust than to gain the admiration of proselytes. There is a glaring deformity in its aspect, which alarms you at the very outset, and is an outrage to that natural morality which dark and corrupted as it is, is still strong enough to lift its loud remonstrance against it. But in the Antinomianism of high-

wrought sentiment, there is a deception far more insinuating. It steals upon you under the semblance of virtue. It is supported by the delusive colouring of imagination and poetry. It has all the graces and embellishments of literature to recommend it. Vanity is soothed, and conscience lulls itself to repose in this dream of feeling and of indolence.

Let us dismiss these lying vanities, and regulate our lives by the truth and soberness of the New Testament. Benevolence is not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. It is a business with men as they are, and with human life as drawn by the rough hand of experience. It is a duty which you must perform at the call of principle, though there be no voice of eloquence to give splendour to your exertions, and no music or poetry to lead your willing footsteps through the bowers of enchantment. It is not the impulse of high and ecstatic emotion. It is an exertion of principle. You must go to the poor man's cottage, though no verdure flourish around it, and no rivulet be nigh to delight you by the gentleness of its murmurs. If you look for the romantic simplicity of fiction, you will be disappointed: but it is your duty to persevere, in spite of every discouragement. Benevolence is not merely a feeling, but a principle; not a dream of rapture for the fancy to indulge in, but a business for the hand to execute.

It must now be obvious to all of you, that it is not enough that you give money, and add your name to the contributors of charity—you must give it with judgment. You must give your time and your attention. You must descend to the trouble of examination. You must rise from the repose of contemplation, and make yourself acquainted with the objects of your benevolent exercises. Will he husband your charity with care, or will he squander it away in idleness and dissipation? Will he satisfy himself with the brutal luxury of the moment, and neglect the supply of his more substantial necessities, or suffer his children to be trained in ignorance and depravity? Will charity corrupt him by laziness? What is his peculiar necessity? Is it the want of health or the want of employment? Is it the pressure of a numerous family? Does he need medicine to administer to the diseases of his children? Does he need fuel or raiment to pro-

tect them from the inclemency of winter? Does he need money to satisfy the yearly demands of his landlord, or to purchase books and to pay for the education of his offspring!

To give money is not to do all the work and labour of benevolence. You must go to the poor man's bed. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. You must examine his accounts. You must try to recover those debts which are due to his family. You must try to recover those wages which are detained by the injuries or the rapacity of his master. You must employ your meditation with his superiors. You must represent to them the necessities of his situation. You must solicit their assistance, and awaken their feelings to the tale of his calamity. This is benevolence in its plain and sober, and substantial reality, though eloquence may have withheld its imagery, and poetry may have denied its graces and its embellishments. This is true and unsophisticated goodness. It may be recorded in no earthly documents; but if done under the influence of christian principle—in a word, done unto Jesus, it is written in the book of heaven, and will give a new lustre to that crown to which his disciples look forward in time, and will wear through eternity.

You have all heard of the division of labour, and I wish you to understand, that the advantage of this principle may be felt as much in the operations of charity, as in the operations of trade and manufactures. The work of beneficence does not lie in the one act of giving money; there must be the act of attendance; there must be the act of inquiry; there must be the act of judicious application. But I can conceive that an individual may be so deficient in the varied experience and attention which a work so extensive demands, that he may retire in disgust and discourgement from the practice of charity altogether. The institution of a Society, such as this saves this individual to the cause. It takes upon itself all the subsequent acts in the work and labour of love, and restricts his part to the mere act of giving money. It fills the middle space between the dispensers and the recipients of charity. The habits of many who now hear me, may disqualify them for the work of examination. They may have no time for it; they may live at a distance

from the objects; they may neither know how to introduce, nor how to conduct themselves in the management of all the details; their want of practice and of experience may disable them for the work of repelling imposition; they should try to gain the necessary habits; it is right that every individual among us, should each, in his own sphere, consider the poor, and qualify themselves for a judicious and discriminating charity. But, in the mean time, the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick, is an instrument ready made to our hands. Avail yourselves of this instrument immediately, as, by the easiest part of the exercise of charity, which is to give money, you carry home to the poor all the benefits of its most difficult exercises. The experience which you want, the members of this laudable Society are in possession of. By the work and observation of years, a stock of practical wisdom is now accumulated among them. They have been long inured to all that is loathsome and discouraging in this good work, and they have nerve, and hardihood, and principle to front it. They are every way qualified to be the carriers of your bounty, for it is a path they have long travelled in. Give the money and these conscientious men will soon bring it into contact with the right objects. They know the way through all the obscurities of this metropolis, and they can bring the offerings of your charity to people whom you will never see, and into houses which you will never enter. It is not easy to conceive, far less to compute the extent of human misery; but these men can give you experience for it. They can show you their registers of the sick and of the dying; they are familiar with disease in all its varieties of faintness, and breathlessness, and pain.—Sad union! they are called to witness it in conjunction with poverty; and well do they know that there is an eloquence in the imploring looks of these helpless poor, which no description can set before you. Oh! my brethren, figure to yourselves the calamity in all its soreness, and measure your bounty by the actual greatness of the claims, and not by the feebleness of their advocate.

I have trespassed upon your patience; but, at the hazard of carrying my address to a length that is unusual, I must still say more. Nor would I ever forgive myself if I neglected to set

the eternity of the poor in all its importance before you. This is the second point of consideration to which I wish to direct you. The man who considers the poor will give his chief anxiety to the wants of their eternity. It must be evident to all of you that this anxiety is little felt. I do not appeal for the evidence of this to the selfish part of mankind—there we are not to expect it. I go to those who are really benevolent—who have a wish to make others happy, and who take trouble in so doing; and it is a striking observation, how little the salvation of these others is the object of that benevolence which makes them so amiable. It will be found that in and by far the greater number of instances, this principle is all consumed on the accommodations of time, and the necessities of the body. It is the meat which feeds them—the garment which covers them—the house which shelters them—the money which purchases all things; these, I say, are what form the chief topics of benevolent anxieties. Now, we do not mean to discourage this principle. We cannot afford it; there is too little of it; and it forms too refreshing an exception to that general selfishness which runs throughout the haunts of business and ambition, for us to say any thing against it. We are not cold-blooded enough to refuse our delighted concurrence to an exertion so amiable in its principle, and so pleasing in the warm and comfortable spectacle which it lays before us. The poor, it is true, ought never to forget, that it is to their own industry, and to the wisdom and economy of their own management, that they are to look for the elements of subsistence—that if idleness and prodigality shall lay hold of the mass of our population, no benevolence, however unbounded, can ever repair a mischief so irrecoverable—that if they will not labour for themselves, it is not in the power of the rich to create a sufficiency for them; and that though every heart were opened, and every purse emptied in the cause, it would absolutely go for nothing towards forming a well-fed, a well-lodged or a well conditioned peasantry. Still, however, there are cases which no foresight could prevent, and no industry could provide for—where the blow falls heavy and unexpected on some devoted son or daughter of misfortune, and where, though thoughtlessness and folly

may have had their share, benevolence, not very nice in its calculations, will feel the overpowering claim of actual, helpless, and imploring misery. Now, I again offer my cheerful testimony to such benevolence as this; I count it delightful to see it singling out its object; and sustaining it against the cruel pressure of age and of indigence; and when I enter a cottage where I see a warmer fire-side, or more substantial provision, than the visible means can account for, I say that the landscape, in all its summer glories, does not offer an object so gratifying, as when referred to the vicinity of the great man's house, and the people who live in it, and am told that I will find my explanation *there*. Kind and amiable people! your benevolence is most lovely in its display, but Oh! it is perishable in its consequences. Does it never occur to you that in a few years this favourite will die—and that he will go to the place where neither cold nor hunger will reach him, but that a mighty interest remains, of which both of us may know the certainty, though neither you nor I can calculate the extent. Your benevolence is too short. —It does not shoot far enough a-head.—It is like regaling a child with a sweetmeat or a toy, and then abandoning the happy, unreflecting infant to exposure. You make the poor old man happy with your crumbs and your fragments, but he is an infant on the mighty range of infinite duration; and will you leave the soul, which has the infinity to go through to its chance? How comes it that the grave should throw so impenetrable a shroud over the realities of eternity? How comes it that heaven, and hell, and judgment, should be treated as so many nonentities, and that there should be as little real and operative sympathy felt for the soul which lives forever, as for the body after it is dead, or for the dust into which it moulders? Eternity is longer than time; the arithmetic, my brethren, is all one side upon this question; and the wisdom which calculates, and guides itself by calculation, gives its weighty and respectable support to what may be called the benevolence of faith.

Now, if there be one employment more fitted than another to awaken this benevolence, it is the peculiar employment of that Society for which I am now pleading. I would have anticipated such benevolence from the situation they occupy, and the

information before the public bears testimony to the fact. The Truth is that the diseases of the body may be looked upon as so many outlets through which the soul finds its way to eternity. Now, it is at these outlets that the members of this Society have stationed themselves. This is the interesting point of survey at which they stand, and from which they command a look of both worlds. They have placed themselves in the avenues which lead from time to eternity, and they have often to witness the awful transition of a soul hovering at the entrance—struggling its way through the valley of the shadow of death, and at last breaking loose from the confines of all that is visible. Do you think it likely that men with such spectacles before them, will withstand the sense of eternity? No, my brethren, they cannot, they have not. Eternity, I rejoice to announce to you, is not forgotten by them; and with their care for the diseases of the body, they are neither blind nor indifferent to the fact, that the soul is diseased also. We know it well. There is an indolent and superficial theology, which turns its eyes from the danger, and feels no pressing call for the application of the remedy—which reposes more in its own vauge and self-assumed conceptions of the mercy of God, than in the firm and consistent representations of the New Testament—which overlooks the existence of disease altogether, and therefore feels no alarm, and exerts no urgency in the business—which, in the face of all the truths and all the severities that are uttered in the word of God leaves the soul to its chance; or, in other words, by neglecting to administer every thing specific for the salvation of the soul, leaves it to perish.

We do not want to involve you in controversies; we only ask you to open the New Testament and attend to the obvious meaning of a word which occurs frequently in its pages—we mean the word *saved*. The term surely implies, that the present state of the thing to be saved is a lost and an undone state. If a tree be in a healthful state from its infancy, you never apply the term saved to it, though you see its beautiful foliage, its flourishing blossoms, its abundant produce, and its progressive ascent through all the varieties incidental to a sound and a prosperous tree. But if it were diseased in its infancy, and ready

to perish, and if it were restored by management and artificial applications, then you would say of this tree that it was *saved*; and the very term implies some previous state of uselessness and corruption. What, then, are we to make of the frequent occurrence of this term in the New Testament, as applied to a human being? If men come into this world pure and innocent, and have nothing more to do but to put forth the powers with which nature has endowed them, and so rise through the progressive stages of virtue and excellence, to the rewards of immortality, you would not say of these men that they were saved when they were translated to these rewards. These rewards of man are the natural effects of his obedience, and the term *saved* is not at all applicable to such a supposition. But the God of the Bible says differently. If a man obtain heaven at all, it is by being saved. He is in a diseased state, and it is by the healing application of the blood of the Son of God, that he is restored from that state. The very title applied to him proves the same thing. He is called *our Saviour*. The deliverance, which he effects is called our salvation. The men whom he doth deliver are called the *saved*. Doth not this imply some previous state of disease and helplessness? And from the frequent and incidental occurrence of this term, may we not gather an additional testimony to the truth of what is elsewhere more expressly revealed to us, that we are lost by nature, and that to obtain recovery, we must be found in Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost. He that believeth on the Son of God shall be saved, but he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him.

We know that there are some who loathe this representation; but this is just another example of the substantial interests of the poor being sacrificed to mismanagement and delusion. It is to be hoped that there are many who have looked the disease fairly in the face, and are ready to reach forward the remedy adapted to relieve it. We should have no call to attend to the spiritual interests of men, if they could safely be left to themselves, and to the spontaneous operation of those powers with which it is supposed that nature has endowed them. But this is not the state of the case. We come into the world with the

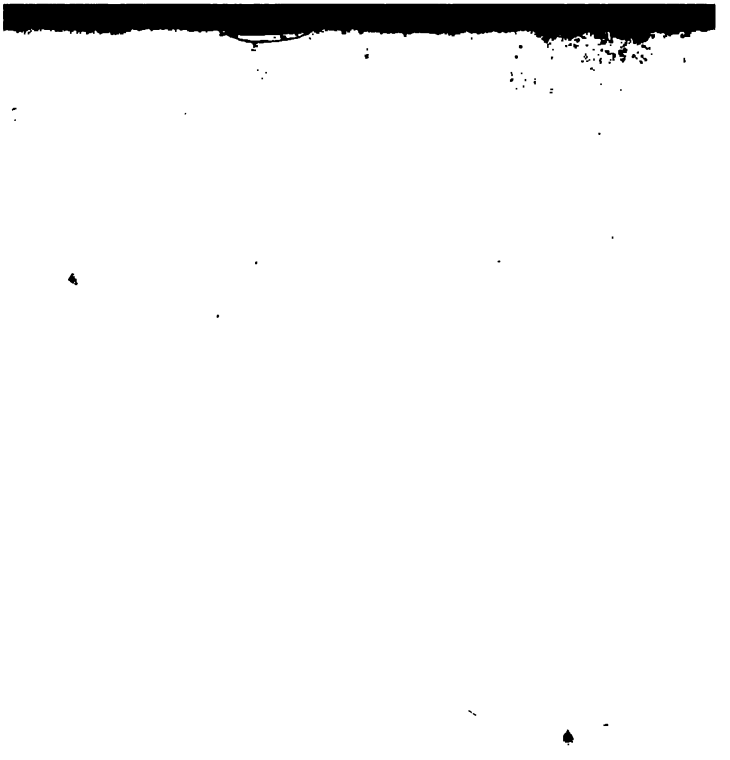
principles of sin and condemnation within us; and, in the congenial atmosphere of this world's example, these ripen fast for the execution of the sentence. During the period of this short but interesting passage to another world, the remedy is in the gospel held out to all, and the freedom and universality of its invitations, while it opens assured admission to all who will, must aggravate the weight and severity of the sentence to those who will not; and upon them the dreadful energy of that saying will be accomplished,—"How shall they escape if they neglect so great a salvation?"

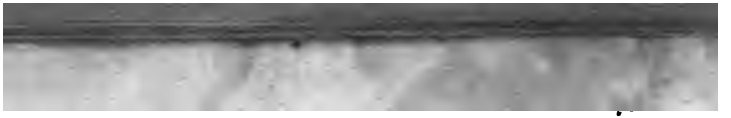
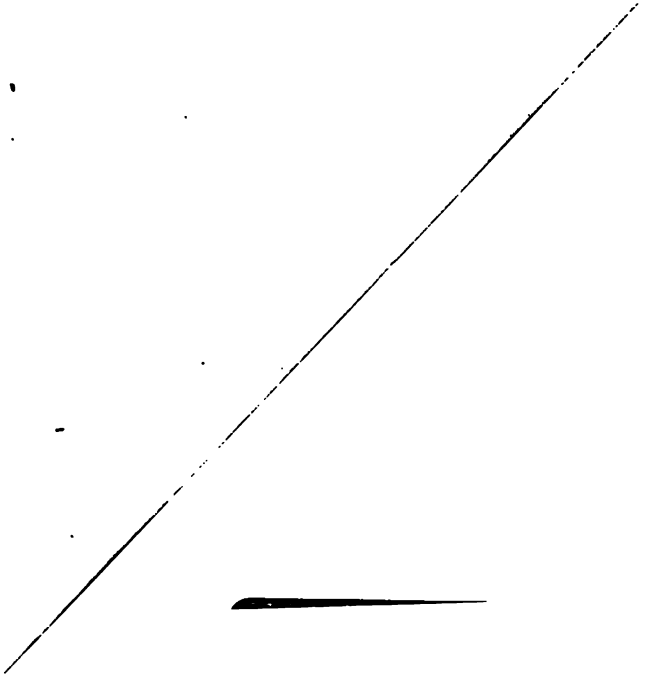
We know part of your labours for the eternity of the poor. We know that you have brought the Bible into contact with many a soul. And we are sure that this is suiting the remedy to the disease; for the Bible contains those words which are the power of God through faith unto salvation, to every one who believes them.

To this established instrument for working faith in the heart, add the instrument of hearing. When you give the Bible, accompany the gift with the living energy of a human voice—let prayer, and advice, and explanation, be brought to act upon them; and let the warm and deeply felt earnestness of your hearts, discharge itself upon theirs in the impressive tones of sincerity, and friendship, and good will. This is going substantially to work. It is, if I may use the expression, bringing the right element to bear upon the case before you; and be assured, every treatment of a convinced and guilty mind is superficial and ruinous, which does not lead it to the Saviour, and bring before it his sacrifice and atonement, and the influences of that spirit bestowed through his obedience on all who believe on Him.

While in the full vigour of health we may count it enough to take up with something short of this. But—striking testimony to evangelical truth! go to the awful reality of a human soul on the eve of its departure from the body, and you will find that all those vapid sentimentalities which partake not of the substantial doctrine of the New Testament, are good for nothing. Hold up your face my brethren, for the truth and simplicity of the Bible. Be not ashamed of its phraseology. It is the right instrument to

handle in the great work of calling a human soul out of darkness into marvellous light. Stand firm and secure on the impregnable principle, that this is the word of God, and that all taste, and imagination, and science, must give way before its overbearing authority. Walk in the footsteps of your Saviour, in the twofold office of caring for the diseases of the body, and administering to the wants of the soul; and though you may fail in the former—though the patient may never arise and walk, yet, by the blessing of Heaven upon your fervent and effectual endeavours the latter object may be gained—the soul may be lightened of all its anxieties the whole burden of its diseases may be swept away—it may be of good cheer, because its sins are forgiven—and the right direction may be impressed upon it, which will carry it forward in progress to a happy eternity. Death may not be averted, but death may be disarmed. It may be stript of its terrors, and instead of a devouring enemy, it may be hailed as a messenger of triumph.

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